DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 546 CS 510 463

TITLE	Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (83rd, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9-12, 2000). Radio-Television Journalism Division.
INSTITUTION	Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	168p.; For other sections of this proceedings, see CS 510 451-470.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Content Analysis; Economic Factors; Editing; Empowerment; Higher Education; Journalism; *Journalism Education; News Media; *News Reporting; Ownership; Race; Radio; Social Class; *Television; Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS	Deregulation; Local Television Stations; Writing Style

ABSTRACT

The Radio-Television Journalism Division section of the proceedings contains the following six papers: "Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment: Why the Public's Main Source of News Falls Short" (Denise Barkis Richter); "For the Ear to Hear: Conversational Writing on the Network Television News Magazines" (C. A. Tuggle, Suzanne Huffman and Dana Rosengard); "Synergy Bias: Conglomerates and Promotion in the News" (Dmitri Williams); "Constructing Class & Race in Local TV News" (Don Heider and Koji Fuse); "Going Digital: An Exploratory Study of Nonlinear Editing Technology in Southeastern Television Newsrooms" (Seok Kang, George L. Daniels, Tanya Auguston and Alyson Belatti); and "Deregulation and Commercial Radio Network News: A Qualitative Analysis" (Richard Landesberg). (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 447 546

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (83rd, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9-12, 2000). Radio-Television Journalism Division.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS 510 463

J. McGill

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment:
Why the Public's Main Source of News Falls Short

Denise Barkis Richter, Ph.D.
Department of Communications
Palo Alto College
1400 W. Villaret
San Antonio, Texas 78224
(210) 921-5442
dbarkisr@accd.edu

Submitted to the Radio-Television Journalism Division
for consideration for AEJMC's 2000 Convention

ABSTRACT

A content analysis of local television news revealed that only one out of four stories contained empowering information. Through participant observation at a local television news station and in-depth interviews with local television newsworkers, three principal reasons emerged why empowering information was excluded: 1) the absence of the station's commitment to provide empowering information; 2) newsworkers' lack of enterprise; and 3) the newsworkers' perception of viewers and what their viewers want.

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment

> I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.
>
> —Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826
> *September 28, 1820, letter to William Charles Jarvis*
> (Kaplan, 1882, rpt. 1992)

True democracy requires an empowered citizenry capable of making decisions and accepting responsibility. To become empowered, citizens must have access to useful and relevant information. Since local television news is the main source of local information for most Americans, it could be an ideal arena for empowering information; however, there is a paucity of empowering information featured on local television news. In this study, I examine the extent to which empowering information is found in local television newscasts. I also explore the reasons local television news is depicted as it is by analyzing the news values, routines, and organizational structures of local television news that appear to hinder the inclusion of empowering information. Finally, I develop suggestions for conditions that would ensure that empowering information is included in local television newscasts.

I believe that citizens—especially citizens whose main source of news is local television—aren't able to respond collectively to problems or to get involved because they have not been empowered to do so. Empowering information is user-friendly information that offers an opportunity for citizen action. This study is not concerned with what viewers do with empowering information once they have it. Rather, this study is interested in learning whether or not the information is present. And if it is not, why not? Empowering information can be seen as a minimum threshold or a pre-requisite of participation. If viewers are presented empowering information, they are able to decide whether or not to take action. If they are not presented empowering information, then they have not been given the opportunity to decide whether or not to take action.

Casual observation of local television news suggested there was little empowering information presented to viewers. Through a content analysis, I explored just how much empowering information was included in local television news stories. I also reviewed the types of stories that were more likely to include empowering information. To answer the why and how questions of this research, I spent a month as a participant observer in a local television newsroom, and I conducted in-depth interviews with key newsworkers to investigate what news values, routines, and organizational structures impede or facilitate empowering information's inclusion. Since Americans say that local television news is their main source of news, it is my hope that journalism professionals, journalism educators, and American citizens will benefit from this work.

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment

Literature Review

This study's rationale rests on three main premises. First, that true democracy requires an empowered citizenry capable of making decisions and accepting responsibility. Second, that citizens must have access to useful and relevant information to become empowered. And third, local television news could be an ideal arena for empowering information since it is the main source of news for most Americans; however, local television's current news values, routines, and organizational structures seem to inhibit the inclusion of empowering information. The influence that local television news has on its viewers, both in transmission—giving information—and ritual—producing, maintaining, repairing and transforming reality—terms, as defined by James Carey in his book, *Communication as Culture*, is also taken as a given in this study (1989; rpt. 1992). Carey believes that journalists fail to recognize their ritual role. "The press, by seeing its role as that of informing the public, abandons its role as an agency for carrying on the conversation of our culture," he wrote (Carey, p. 82). I believe that journalists' failure to recognize their ritual role is at the root of why empowering information is left out of the news.

The following review of the literature will explore the above premises by reviewing definitions of empowerment as well as studies in information, local television news, media sociology, and public journalism.

Definitions of Empowerment

The concept that Jefferson had in mind when he wrote of informing people's discretion was empowerment, although he didn't call it that. To empower is "to give faculties or abilities: enable" (Gove, 1971, p. 744). Also, "to give power to; to authorize" (Guralnik, 1982, p. 152). Elizabeth Thoman, Executive Director of the Center for Media & Values, said, "When people are not empowered, they can be victimized. When you look at TV passively, you're obviously not engaged by it. To be empowered, you've got to get over your passivity" (DuBrow, 1993, p. F15). According to Sandra Arbetter, M.S.W., empowerment "means no longer feeling helpless. It means believing you can change things" (Arbetter, 1992, p. 18). Myles Horton, a pioneer of education for social change, defined empowerment as "helping people develop the capacity to make decisions and to take responsibility" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 125). He believed in letting people use expert information, provided that the experts did not tell people what to do. Like Jefferson, Horton believed that people should be given information along with the freedom to decide what to do with it (p. 130). Rappaport defined empowerment as "a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs" (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122). Empowerment is a multilevel construct that deals with an individual's psychological sense of personal influence as well as their actual social, political and legal influence, and Rappaport believes it is best studied over time in both people and settings (p. 121 and p. 138). Zimmerman wrote that empowerment "embodies an interaction between individuals and environments that is culturally and contextually defined" (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 170). He named three contexts, or three levels, where empowerment can be studied: the individual, the organizational, and the community. For the individual, empowerment is

"participatory behavior, motivations to exert control, and feelings of efficacy and control" (p. 169). At the organizational level, empowerment is "shared leadership, opportunities to develop skills, expansion, and effective community influence" (pp. 169-170). And at the community level, empowerment includes "empowered organizations," "opportunities for citizen participation in community decision making," and "fair consideration of multiple perspectives during time of conflict" (p. 170).

In short, empowerment is a construct that can be studied on several interrelated levels. In order for individuals to gain mastery over the affairs of their community, they must be given the opportunity to learn, to participate, to make decisions, and to accept responsibility. Local television news' role in the creation of this opportunity is the focus of this research.

Studies on Information

The first step toward informing people's discretion is to provide them with information. The following authors have identified three types of information—mobilizing, enabling, and public policy—that are sometimes found in the mass media.

Lemert defined mobilizing information as "any information that allows people to act on the attitudes they already have," (Lemert & Ashman, 1983, p. 657) and as "any information which allows action by persons willing to do so" (Lemert & Larkin, 1979, p. 504). Also, "Mobilizing information provides help (e.g. names, addresses, dates, locations) to persons wishing to express their views in the political process, but who would otherwise be without sufficient knowledge to direct their activities effectively" (Hungerford & Lemert, 1973, p. 477). There are three different categories of mobilizing information (MI): locational, identificational, and tactical. (Lemert, 1981). Locational MI "usually provides information about both time and place for activity" (p. 121). Identificational MI "usually involves both names and enough locational MI to enable persons to recognize and/or contact the person, groups, or entity thus identified" (p. 121). Tactical MI "makes available explicit and implicit behavioral models" (p. 121). Mobilizing information, like traditional journalism, is not persuasive; it is only information (p. 131).

Hungerford and Lemert found that only one out of five environmental stories in 20 of Oregon's newspapers contained any mobilizing information, with 45 percent of those stories featuring traditional meeting announcements (1973, p. 480). An additional 27 percent of the items that contained mobilizing information featured "positive" stories of civic groups planning a tree-planting or trash pickup activity (p. 480). In another study of 11 prominent American newspapers, Lemert and his colleagues looked at news stories, letters to the editor, editorials, columns, photo captions, and stock market tables and found that 36 percent of the 1,596 items (574 items) they examined had some mobilizing information (Lemert, Mitzman, Seither, Cook & Hackett, 1977, p. 723). Only 6 percent of those 574 items (34 items) dealt with political issues or the political process, however (p. 723). The researchers also found that special interest sections (food, business, women, entertainment) were much more likely to have mobilizing information than the main news pages or the editorial pages (pp. 724-725). Lemert and his colleagues concluded that mobilizing information is not included in negative and controversial contexts, in non-local stories where it's considered dull detail, in public affairs items in the main news pages, or in the editorial pages (p. 725).

Following this study, Lemert and a colleague found that letters to the editor of a Eugene, Oregon newspaper with mobilizing information were more likely to be rejected because of explicit or implicit editorial policies (Lemert and Larkin, 1979, pp. 507-508). More than half of the letters that included mobilizing information were rejected, and instead of editing out the mobilizing information, the entire letter was usually rejected (p. 507). Lemert then conducted an experiment with 56 journalists to determine why mobilizing information was left out (Lemert, 1984, p. 245). He found that "dull detail" was the most frequent reason given for cutting mobilizing information from a news story (p. 247). However, when the story was written in a positive context, significantly more mobilizing information was left in the story (p. 246). The experiment demonstrated that journalists were much less likely to include mobilizing information in a controversial story, even when they had the mobilizing information at their fingertips (p. 249).

Lemert and his students had also received the "dull detail" rationale for cutting mobilizing information from local television news stories (Lemert, 1981, p. 137). During a two-week period, nineteen stories with mobilizing information made it into the local newspaper, but only seven of those same stories contained mobilizing information when broadcast during a 30-minute local television newscast (p. 137). Finally, Lemert attributed journalists' refusal to include mobilizing information in their news stories to their issue-centeredness (p. 138). He wrote that journalists are more concerned with describing and analyzing public issues than with the public's role in helping to solve those issues (p. 138). Lemert's overriding concern is that mobilizing information is currently limited to persons who already have it or can obtain it on their own (p. 154).

Rossow and Dunwoody expanded Lemert's concept by introducing a range of information. They researched the amount of useful detail found in 12 newspapers' coverage of a high-level nuclear waste site (Rossow & Dunwoody, 1991, p. 87). In 2,400 news stories related to a nuclear waste site, information that provided sufficient detail about people, places or things was termed enabling information and was measured as being complete, partial or non-existent (pp. 87 & 89). Enabling information alerts readers to relevant issues and events and gives them the opportunity to influence those issues and events if they would like (p. 87). Rossow and Dunwoody found that readers were given enabling information in nearly three out of four stories but were provided complete information which would have enabled them to act immediately in only one-fourth of those stories (p. 87). The authors also found that editors who were personally concerned about the waste site and who believed their readers were concerned provided more enabling information about the site in their newspaper's stories (p. 89).

Keefer (1993) studied eight major issues before the U.S. House of Representatives and found that the news media hinder citizen participation in the congressional policymaking process. "The news media rarely explained the implications of a pending issue, rarely alerted the public to a forthcoming vote on an issue and never described the views of a local congressman on an issue," he wrote (p. 412). Keefer delineated three content categories for information on public policy issues: 1) policy information: "information defining and backgrounding the issue and information describing the competing proposals to resolve them;" 2) political information: "information about the composition, strength and views of the

competing forces and information about the likely effects of a policymaker's action on his or her career;" and 3) operational information: "information about the locus, timing and procedures for issue-related decisions that need to be made by policymaking bodies"(p. 413). Keefer believes that citizens can get involved in an issue's policymaking process only if they possess policy and operational information (p. 413).

In addition, a wealth of studies have been done on how people process information,[1] recall information,[2] comprehend information,[3] and miss information.[4] In general, these studies reveal that the mass media could do a better job of communicating information to the public. This study, however, is concerned with why certain information—like mobilizing, enabling, and public policy information—rarely makes it onto the air.

Studies in Local Television News

Local television news research is a relatively new field, mainly because local television news—compared to print and network news—is relatively new. News selection, news coverage, newsworkers, and news audiences have been the primary focus of local television news research.

News Selection Studies

Many of Berkowitz's local television news studies examined news selection. One study looked at the number of mailed-in news releases that made it past one station's local television news assignments editors and producers and found that only a quarter of them, mainly from non-profit organizations and interest groups, did (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990, p. 723). Another of his story selection studies found that the traditional gatekeeping metaphor for news needed to be refined since the structure of the newscast format strongly influenced story selection (Berkowitz, 1990, p. 66). He also found that news decisions were made by a group rather than a single gatekeeper (p. 62). In addition, he discovered that the traditional news values of timeliness, significance, proximity, known principal, and conflict accounted for only one-fifth of the stories that aired (p. 61). In this same study, several local television news decision-makers described news values as a balance between importance, interest and visual impact (pp. 64-65). Finally, Berkowitz found that news stories traveled not through just one gate, but through many gates, with spot news at times closing the gate on planned stories, and resource constraints and logistical problems sometimes closing the news on spot news (p. 66). Another gatekeeper study found that localness was the most important reason news releases were saved or rejected (Abbott & Brassfield, 1989, p. 854).

---

[1]See (Graber, 1988).
[2]See (Perloff, Wartella & Becker, 1982); (Robinson and Levy, 1986); and (Perse, 1990).
[3]See (Robinson & Davis, 1990); (Price & Zaller, 1993); (Schultz, 1993);(McLeod & Perse, 1994) and (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986).
[4]See (Dervin, 1989).

In another study, Berkowitz confirmed the impact of local television news' resource constraints on story selection (Berkowitz, 1991, p. 249). News judgment, resource constraints, information subsidies, and electronic technologies were found to account for more than 50 percent of the variance in the selection of stories at a local television news station (p. 251). The importance of news judgment on story selection was seconded by local television newsworkers in another of his studies (Berkowitz, 1993, p. 77).

McManus (1994) also studied news selection when he conducted a three-stage study of discovery, selection, and reporting in local television news. In the first stage, discovery, McManus looked at how news is discovered at four mid-sized, large, and very large stations by distributing a questionnaire that covered every news story on the evening newscasts and by shadowing reporters on the job. He found that minimally active news discovery was the norm in all but the largest station (p. 105). Active discovery of news is more expensive than passive discovery of news, but McManus noted that the median pretax profit on gross revenues was 15.8 percent for mid-sized stations, 30 percent for large stations, and 39 percent for very large stations as compared to the national manufacturing average of 9 percent (p. 107).

In the second stage, selection, McManus argued that one of three kinds of logic prevails: predominantly journalistic, which entailed getting the story regardless of the cost; predominantly market , which kept a close eye on the bottom line; or a compromise between journalism and market (p. 114). In order to determine which logic took the lead, McManus had two pairs of expert journalists rate the news value of almost 300 stories from 12 newscasts, four from each of the three stations. McManus found that a compromise logic existed at the two larger stations, but a business logic existed at the mid-sized station (p. 125). McManus also looked at the amount of local news each station broadcast. Out of a 60-minute news hour, each station ran 16 minutes of advertising, the maximum amount allowed by the FCC (p. 128). The mid-size station averaged 17.1 minutes of news, the large station averaged 21.4 minutes, and the very large station ran 29.8 minutes of local news (pp. 128-129).

Local Television News Coverage Studies

Local television news studies, including the one above by McManus, have also researched news coverage. For reporting, the final stage of news production, McManus focused on reporters' objectivity. First, he looked at whether the news was gathered objectively—if it was justifiably factual, relevant, balanced, and neutrally presented. In an earlier article, McManus noted the limitation of this typology since "it says nothing about what is newsworthy" (1991, p. 23). Second, he studied what patterns, if any, existed in journalists violating the norms of objectivity either through their own personal bias; the self-interest of the media firm, its parent corporation, or its major investors; the self-interest of societal elites outside of the media firm; or human error (McManus, 1994, p. 147). To do this, he collected 34 case studies of the three stations' best reporting, which had been defined by the assignments editors as more socially consequential stories done by higher quality journalists. McManus found 20 of the 34 cases failed to meet one or more objectivity requirements and instead served the self-interest of the media firm, its parent corporation, or investors (p. 150). "Contrary to expectation, the more resources and time stations could devote to news-gathering, the greater the percentage of stories with violations," he wrote (p. 150).

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment

Atwater also studied local television news coverage in three cities and found that approximately one of every two local news items were duplicated, with government/politics, crime/courts, and accident/disaster stories the most often duplicated (1986, p. 469). Kaniss found that local television newscasts lead with the best video and sound bites, not necessarily the most important stories of the day (1991, pp. 107-108). She discovered that stories on kidnappings, cults, and blazes are covered, rather than stories on budget allocations and the government, because they are easy to find, simple to report, and lend themselves television's visual nature (p. 117). When government plans or policies do receive coverage, news directors often push reporters to "humanize" the stories, which leads to "scarce time being used for appealing video rather than for the presentation of important information," according to Kaniss (p. 120). In her research, Kaniss also found the push for news that stresses emotion and drama (p. 109). "While a particularly gory crime can be interesting to anyone in the region, local government news has a much narrower sphere of interest," she wrote (p. 118). This factor is influential since one rating point can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars of revenue to a station (p. 103).

Bernstein and Lacy (1992) also found that about 30 percent of all local television news stories dealt with issues and events about some government entity, but that only 11 percent of the large-market stations' stories were in-depth, providing contextual coverage, and only 3 percent of the small-market stations' stories were in-depth (pp. 338-339). Slattery and Hakanen (1994) studied the amount of sensational/human interest stories in local television news by replicating a study done 16 years before covering 10 Pennsylvania stations. The authors found a significant increase in sensational/human interest stories in both early and late evening local newscasts at all stations at the expense of local government, politics, and public policy stories (pp. 210-214). Carroll and his colleagues (1995) found that almost 40 percent of all stories are duplicated on local television news stations, and that sensationalistic stories made up the greatest proportion of the consonant or duplicated news. Stories about crime/courts, accidents/disasters, and human interest accounted for 60 percent of all duplicated stories (Carroll, et al., 1995, p. 3).

Local Television Newsworker Studies

Other studies have focused on people who craft the news. Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade (1980) likened a local television news station to a factory comprised of assembly line workers who followed prescribed routines and churned out a piece of the newscast as their product. Four consequences of this factory-like atmosphere are that local television news lacks flexibility, newsworkers don't make a personal investment since they have little control over the final news product, newswork is evaluated in terms of productivity, and newsworkers' job expectations and job realities are in conflict (p. 59). A study by Smith (1988) found that the newsworkers with the most power to change local news, the news directors, were less likely than reporters or producers to agree that local television news had any shortcomings (p. 346). Producers and reporters, on the other hand, agreed with the critics' negative assessment of local television news. However, they believed that they could usually do their jobs without interference (p. 346). "This implies either that they feel powerless in face of television journalism's

shortcomings, or that they have little desire to improve the quality of television news," wrote Smith (p. 346).

In another study, Berkowitz (1993) surveyed local television news journalists at 12 stations and found three clusters of newsworkers: those with a business/programming thrust who selected news based on format requirements and perceived audience interest; those with a business/resource thrust who selected news based on resource constraints; and those with a journalistic thrust, who applied traditional journalistic criteria in their selection of news. Interestingly enough, work roles—whether the newsworker was a reporter, anchor, producer, editor, or news director—had little to do with the way news was selected (p. 77). Two of the three clusters—73.9 percent of all of the respondents—reported that business concerns shaped news selection (p. 77).

Television News Audience Studies

Iyengar, Kinder, and Lind are three scholars who have studied the news audience. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) conducted a series of experiments to explore the relationship between the public's agenda and television news and found that citizens with limited political resources and skills are strongly influenced by television news (p. 60). In their experiments, the researchers highlighted a problem in a television newscast and found that their research participants believed in the problem's importance, cared about it, wanted more governmental action, and selected it as one of the most important problems facing the country (p. 112). Iyengar and Kinder wrote:

> The general moral here is that judgment and choice are inevitably shaped by considerations that are, however briefly, accessible. And when it comes to political judgment and choice, no institution yet devised can compete with television news in determining which considerations come to light and which remain in darkness (p. 120).

In a later study, Iyengar (1991) found that episodic framing, which focuses on specific events or particular cases, dominates television news' coverage of issues rather than thematic framing, which places political issues and events in some general context (p. 2). "The corollary of television's reliance on episodic framing is that issues that cannot be readily reduced to the level of specific events or occurrences, such as global warming, are seldom covered at all," he wrote (p. 2). In a series of experiments that featured episodic framing, Americans described chronic problems such as poverty and crime as idiosyncratic, focusing on individual and group characteristics rather than some historical, social, or political structural force (pp. 136-137). However, when a more general or analytic frame of reference for national problems was presented, the public's placement of responsibility shifted (p. 137). "The premium placed on episodic framing means that many issues of significance have not received and will not receive the news coverage necessary to permit the public to become critical observers of national affairs," Iyengar wrote (p. 141).

Through in-depth interviews, Lind (1995) studied viewers' perceptions of who they thought was responsible for improving the quality of TV news and found that viewers consider themselves most responsible, along with reporters and news directors (p. 370). She followed up by asking the viewers if they had ever done anything to improve TV news and found that 80 percent had not because of busyness, apathy, or laziness. Some said they hadn't acted because they did not know how to do so, or they hadn't

been bothered enough by the content. Additionally, Lind found that "[m]any felt powerless, that their actions would make no difference" (p. 370).

General Studies in Media Sociology

Since local television news is the main source of news for most Americans, it is important to understand local television news organizations—which news values and routines are supported and which are not. General media sociology studies answer these types of questions, and this area of study has enjoyed a renaissance of late. Important questions that were raised early in this century by Lippmann, Dewey, and scholars at the Chicago School are now experiencing a comeback. Studies based on Lasswell's "Who? Said what? To whom? With what effect?" transmission model are giving way to studies that also acknowledge the ritual nature of communication. The perceived autonomy of individual journalists is under question, and media content is no longer considered a given. Media sociology studies acknowledge the organizational and ideological levels of influence in news production and highlight journalists' restricted range of motion in discovering, selecting and reporting the news. News is no longer considered a mirror of reality, but the constructor of reality, and studies that have glorified central tendencies are being replaced by rich, context-laden work.

White (1950) launched this type of research with his "Mr. Gates" study of a newspaper wire editor. Although this study was still a part of the limited effects and functional tradition, White questioned the content as a given principle. He found the wire editor, the gatekeeper, to be highly subjective in his selection of news, and White indirectly addressed the issue of individual liberty within a larger organizational structure. He didn't, however, take into account what shapes the wire editor's selection.

Breed, a former newspaper reporter-turned-sociologist, followed White and found that newsmen aren't as autonomous as they think they are (Breed, 1955, p. 328). He identified the publisher as the true source of power in the news organization, since s/he sets policy (p. 335). Reporters then sense the policy and perform accordingly (p. 328). Breed, like White, used a functional framework. The publisher, not the system, was found to be at fault (p. 335). He noted that newsworkers were rewarded or punished by their colleagues and superiors, not by their readers (p. 335). Breed also performed a reverse content analysis in the late 1950s to see whether or not the mass media would cover stories that had the potential to injure popular faith in society or its institutions (Breed, 1958, p. 109). He reviewed 11 community studies and wrote down statements he believed would not be featured. He also asked journalists for their feedback, and he used cartoons that had been rejected for publication to come up with the more than 250 issues to consider (p. 111). Almost two-thirds of the items left out by the press concerned the "undemocratic power of the business elites" (p. 111). Religion, justice, health, the family, capitalism, the home, the nation, and the community were also found to be taboo subjects (pp. 111-114).

After Breed and White, media sociology studies were not pursued by communication scholars. Effects research, rather than the analysis of communication messages and processes, was favored (Delia, 1987, p. 34). Communication researchers Lazarsfeld and Hovland cultivated a tightly-knit group of

scholars who provided data that supported the commercial and political interests of those who funded their research (p. 39 and p. 58). Study after study proclaimed the media to have limited effects. Long-term, indirect effects were ignored or downplayed. Fifteen years after Breed's reverse content analysis, one group of scholars—mainly sociologists—began to dismantle the limited effects mindset by revealing the media's unseen power. Even though the scholars worked independently, their findings were similar. These researchers exposed the organizational constraints that shape the news, the media's legitimation of the status quo, and how news constructs reality.

Epstein (1973) was one of the first communications scholars to focus on who and what shaped the news. Unlike White and Breed, who looked at individuals who made news decisions, Epstein looked at what shapes the news by using an organizational approach. He found that news results from a variety of constraints, namely time, money, and manpower, and not from "the arbitrary choices of a few men" (p. 268). Another scholar who uncovered organizational constraints was Fishman (1980), and he detailed how news is influenced by bureaucratic processes. Fishman reasoned that journalists were not sly and cunning operators, but victims of a bureaucracy who relied on raw material—news sources—to provide free, safe, easily available and predictable amounts of news. Turow (1984) also recognized the organizational constraints of news and developed a resource dependency model. He discovered that organizations compete among themselves for money, people, supplies, and information, and in his discovery process he identified 13 different power roles. Turow found that media content was determined by the resulting power struggle and that the media were a reflection of the economic and material conditions of the social system.

Aside from revealing the organizational constraints that influence the news, several scholars, including Fishman, also found that the media legitimate the status quo. The Glasgow University Media Group (1976), European researchers, analyzed the BBC's news coverage of labor-management, inflation, unemployment, wage increases, and the Labour Party. Their findings revealed that the BBC favored the powerful by organizing news around official sources and airing anti-Labour news coverage. Tuchman (1978), an American sociologist who spent 10 years inside newsrooms, also found that news coverage legitimates the status quo and confirms the legitimacy of the state. Her discussion of news frames revealed that frames both produce and limit meaning. "News obfuscates social reality instead of revealing it," she wrote. "It confirms the legitimacy of the state by hiding the state's intimate involvement with, and support of, corporate capitalism" (p. 210). Chomsky and Herman (1988) had similar findings, and their work lead them to develop a propaganda model of media coverage. Through content analysis, they found the news media do not enable "the public to assert meaningful control over the political process by providing them with the information needed for the intelligent discharge of political responsibilities" (p. 298). They, too, found that the media defend the status quo—the economic, social, and political agenda of society's elite.

Finally, media sociologists revealed how the news constructs reality. Gans (1979), an American sociologist like Tuchman, also spent time in newsrooms. Unlike Tuchman, however, Gans did not acknowledge the media's support of the status quo or power in labeling someone or something normal or

deviant, although he did find that "Knowns" made it into the news 70 to 85 percent, rather than "Unknowns" (p. 9). He uncovered eight enduring values that were most often reported in the news: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, and moderatism; and eight dominant activities: government conflicts and disagreements; government decisions, proposals, and ceremonies; government personnel changes; protests, violent and non-violent; crimes, scandals, and investigations; disasters, actual and averted; innovation and tradition; and national ceremonies (pp. 42-52 and pp. 16-18). Gitlin (1980) delved into his involvement with the Students for a Democratic Society and explored the interdependent relationship between the mass media and social movements. He found that the media were far from mirrors passively reflecting social reality, and he showed how the media and the government manipulate the public through the news media. In his book, Gitlin described how the Anti-Vietnam War movement, rather than the war itself, was made to appear scandalous. He also showed how stories were kept off the news agenda, and how the elite of society eventually rallied around an issue to change the course of history.

Writings on Public Journalism

Public or civic journalism has recently gained prominence as an alternative to traditional journalism, but it has met with some resistance. Opponents believe that public journalism is advocacy journalism in disguise and should be avoided so that journalists' non-partisan standing is preserved. They say that journalists should stay out of helping the public set a civic agenda. Proponents believe that public journalism has great potential to reinvigorate journalism and preserve democracy. They say that public journalism is a grassroots type of journalism that can help bring common civic concerns to light.

Although Peter Dahlgren (1995) does not address civic or public journalism directly in his book *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media*, he does so indirectly in his exploration of Jurgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere, "that realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern can take place so that public opinion can be formed" (p. 7). Dahlgren believes that television journalism is "a dominant—and problematic—institution of the public sphere" (p. 70), and he provides a list of concerns to support this problematic claim. These concerns include television journalism's ideological leanings, its "illusion of informedness," its trivialization of important issues, its lack of context, its ability to define and limit political conversation, its commercial imperative, its entertainment leanings, and its tacit support of the status quo, to name a few (p. 46 & p. 48). In addition, Dahlgren writes that citizens are "positioned as spectators of the political system and socialized to a sense of powerlessness" (p. 46). Dahlgren does recognize television journalism's strengths, like fostering awareness of national and international matters (p. 47 & p. 48), and he calls for journalism to be educational (p. 52). "I see no compelling alternative to the long-established ideal that journalism must somehow aim to provide people with informative material to help them make sense of the world and to fulfill their roles as citizens," he wrote (p. 53).

Jay Rosen, director of the Project on Public Life and the Press, is one of the early proponents of public journalism, whose aim is "a healthier public discourse, a citizenry more inclined to participate, a

civic culture that engages more people than it repels" (Rosen & Merritt, 1994, p. 18). This view of journalism does not envision the affairs of the community as being someone else's business, but instead the business of journalists and citizens alike (p. 10). Rosen (1992) wrote:

> The sort of talk a democracy needs has certain characteristics: First, it is open and understandable to all; it deals with major problems affecting society; it is conducted in a civil fashion...; it protects private and intimate matters from the glare of the public realm (p. 11).

He believes that public journalism will improve the quality of public dialogue which in turn will improve the citizenry's capacity to act on the news and deal with the community's problems (Rosen, 1994, p. 3).

Some newspapers, like the *Wichita Eagle*, are practicing public journalism. Davis Merritt, Jr., the *Eagle's* editor and senior vice president wrote,

> . . .public journalism is not a formula; it is a philosophy. It liberates traditional journalism from the artificial constraints it has imposed on itself, allowing it to play the full role implicit in the democratic process: providing relevant information and a place for that information to be discussed and turned into action (Rosen and Merritt, 1994, p. 26).

Ed Fouhy, former executive director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism and a former network news executive, is another proponent of this philosophy. Fouhy believes that the public's hunger for information does not end when elections are over. "It's still there," he wrote, "often expressed as frustration, even cynicism, but beneath the anger runs a strong current of citizenship, a feeling citizens have that they can make the hard choices if we journalists give them the information they need" (Fouhy, 1994b, p. 19). According to Fouhy, validated information and dispassionate analysis are the building blocks of public life. He believes a vigorous civil society cannot exist without the full participation of the media (Fouhy, 1995, p. 15).

A series of learning experiments that included 1,500 research participants confirmed Fouhy's assertion. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) found that television news succeeds in alerting citizens to low salience information, while print excels in communicating high salience information. The researchers followed their experiments with in-depth interviews and found "that at least part of the public's limited interest in the official side of national and international affairs results from a profound sense of powerlessness," they wrote in *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (p. 113. "Our subjects reacted with special enthusiasm to information about how to take control of public issues." The authors encourage journalists to provide "the dimension of civic action" into their news stories (p. 111). In *The Conversation of Journalism: Communication, Community, and News*, Anderson, Dardenne, Killenberg (1994) wrote, "When people feel respected and effective as participants in community life, they are more likely to converse and act as citizens. News organizations can help them achieve conversation and find meaning in citizenship" (p. 104).

Research Questions

With ideas gleaned from various empowerment studies and Lemert's "mobilizing," Rossow and Dunwoody's "enabling" and Keefer's "public policy" information studies, I defined empowering information as information that: 1) offers a concrete opportunity for future citizen action; and 2) is user-

friendly, meaning that the information gives viewers a means to act by providing a phone number, location, date, time, and group or person to contact. With this definition in mind, I explored the following research questions for this study: How much empowering information is included in local television news stories? What types of stories are more likely to include empowering information? Based on prior research, I hypothesize that empowering information will be rarely included. If this is so, what accounts for the level of empowering information included in local television newscasts? What is it about empowering information that does not appeal to local television newsworkers' news values and routines and causes them to leave empowering information out of their definition of news? How do news production values, routines, and organizational structures work to exclude empowering information? And, what news values, routines, and organizational structures would need to be implemented for empowering information to be included? These questions provided the starting point of this study.

Results

This three-pronged study (content analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews) explored the processes of a local television news station to learn what affects empowering information's inclusion in news stories. To review, empowering information is user-friendly information that offers an opportunity for citizen action; it can be viewed as a minimum threshold or a pre-requisite of participation. Empowering information gives citizens the opportunity to get involved in the affairs of their community.

LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS STORY ANALYSIS

Of the 194 news stories analyzed, the largest percentage (24 percent) were crime and court stories (See Table 1). Education stories made up the next largest percentage (10 percent) of the month's news stories, followed by state politics and government (9 percent), national politics and government (8 percent), fire/accidents/disasters (8 percent), weather (7 percent), local politics and government (7 percent), economy/business (7 percent), human interest (6 percent), health/medicine (5 percent), nature (3 percent), and family (2 percent). The analysis covered the month of August, where back to school stories and coverage of the 1996 national political conventions were featured prominently.

Opportunity for citizen action?

Coders were asked to determine whether or not a news story was presented in such a way that it provided an opportunity for citizen action in a concrete way. Fifty-one, or 26 percent, of the 194 news stories analyzed did provide viewers with an opportunity for citizen action (See Table 1). This means nearly three-fourths of the stories that aired did not provide viewers with any empowering information. Fourteen (30 percent) of the 47 crime/court stories provided an opportunity for citizen action, as did eight (53 percent) of the 15 local politics and government stories, seven (70 percent) of the 10 health/medicine stories, and five (33 percent) of the 15 news of weather stories; however, only one (6 percent) of the 16 national politics and government stories, three (17 percent) of the 17 state politics and

government stories, and three (15 percent) of the 20 education stories provided viewers with an opportunity for citizen action (See Table 1).

Of the 14 crime/court stories that provided empowering information, 10 asked viewers to help locate a suspected criminal by giving a description and a phone number to call if the viewer had information. The remaining four crime/court stories that contained empowering information included a story on a police-sponsored event called "National Night Out" that encouraged neighbors to get to know one another; a story on citizens meeting to discuss the best way to protect themselves from a sexual assaulter; a story on parents coming together to discuss a recent stabbing in their children's school; and a story on community policing.

Table 1: Number of news stories with an opportunity for citizen action.

News Categories	*Total # of Stories*	*Opportunity*	*No Opportunity*
Crime/Courts	47	14	33
Education	20	3	17
State Pol/Govt	17	3	14
Nat'l Pol/Govt	16	1	15
Fire/Acc/Disasters	16	2	14
Weather	15	5	10
Local Pol/Govt	15	8	7
Economy/Busn	13	2	11
Human Interest	11	1	10
Health/Medicine	10	7	3
Nature	6	2	4
Family	4	2	2
Sports	1	0	1
Int'l Pol/Govt	1	0	1
Communication	1	1	0
Science/Tech	1	0	1
TOTAL	194	51 (26%)	143 (74%)

User-friendliness: non-existent, partial, or complete?

If a story contained empowering information, it was analyzed to determine whether or not it gave viewers the means to act. The story was coded completely user-friendly if it provided a phone

number, time, date, location, group or person to contact. It was coded partially user-friendly if one or more of the above pieces of information was given. One hundred and forty-three (74 percent) of the 194 news stories analyzed did not provide an opportunity for citizen action; therefore, those stories were not user-friendly. Of the 51 stories remaining, 41 (21 percent) were partially user-friendly and 10 (5 percent) were completely user-friendly (See Table 2). Crime/court stories were the most user-friendly. Twelve of the 47 crime/court stories contained partially user-friendly empowering information, and two of the 47 were completely user-friendly. However, 33 of the 47 crime/court stories did not contain any empowering information; therefore, they were not user-friendly. Eight of the 15 local politics and government stories were partially user-friendly, but the remaining seven stories were not user-friendly since they did not contain any empowering information. Four of the 10 health/medicine stories were partially user-friendly, three were completely user-friendly, and three were not user-friendly. Five of the 15 weather stories were partially user-friendly. The remaining news categories had partial to non-existent user-friendly empowering information.

Table 2: User-friendliness of news stories.

News Categories	*Not User-Friendly*	*Partially User-Friendly*	*Completely User-Friendly*
Crime/Courts	33	12	2
Education	17	2	1
State Pol/Govt	14	2	1
Nat'l Pol/Govt	15	1	0
Fire/Acc/Disasters	14	2	0
Weather	10	5	0
Local Pol/Govt	7	8	0
Economy/Busn	11	0	2
Human Interest	10	1	0
Heath/Medicine	3	4	3
Nature	4	2	0
Family	2	1	1
Sports	1	0	0
Int'l Pol/Govt	1	0	0
Communication	0	1	0
Science/Tech	1	0	0
TOTAL	143 (74%)	41 (21%)	10 (5%)

Local politics and government stories

Since the 6 p.m. newscast is considered the local newscast of record by both the assignments manager and the news director, local politics and government stories were analyzed. Fifteen (8 percent) of the month's 194 stories were local politics and government stories. Three of the 15 stories concerned new boating regulations on area lakes, three involved roads, and three concerned the local city council. Two of the stories featured a bicycle helmet law, two were stories on a suburban township's water supply, and two stories concerned animals. Of the 15 local politics and government stories, eight (53 percent) contained empowering information: all three of the boating stories, but only one of the helmet stories, one of the road stories, one of the water supply stories, one of the city council stories, and one of the animal stories. Not a single local politics and government story was completely user-friendly. In addition, six of the 15 stories were geared toward individual action, one story provided information that would allow individuals to participate with other citizens, and one story provided information that would allow both individual and community action.

Top stories

The 6 p.m. newscast's top stories provide another window of analysis. The top story—the story that airs at the beginning of the newscast—is selected by the newsworkers as the most important story of the day. Because of the top stories' placement, more emphasis is given. Often the top story has "outboards," similar to print journalism's "sidebars," which means that additional stories or angles on the same subject are given time. Six (30 percent) of the twenty top stories covered the Republican and Democratic national conventions. Five (25 percent) of the top stories were crime/court-related, five (25 percent) were weather-related, and there was one (5 percent) top story each on state politics and government, education, health and medicine, and communications. Of all the top stories, only two contained empowering information. One top story dealt with new postal regulations, and the other story concerned allergies.

Packages

Packages—a videotaped story that includes a reporter's narration over video, sources' interviews called soundbites, and a stand-up of the reporter appearing on camera from the scene—are another avenue of analysis. Packages are given more time and, therefore, like top stories, have more emphasis. Of the 194 stories that aired during the month, 49 (25 percent) were packages. Seven of the 49 packages were state politics and government stories. Crime/court stories, health/medicine stories, education stories, and economy/business stories each had six packages. National politics and government had five packages, human feature had four packages, nature had three packages, weather and local politics and government each had two packages, and fire/accidents/disaster and communication each had one package.

Nineteen (39 percent) of the 49 packages contained empowering information. Not one of the seven state politics and government packages contained empowering information. One of the five national politics and government stories and both of the local politics and government stories contained

empowering information. One of the local politics and government packages concerned a suburban township's water supply, and the other concerned a complaint line that could be called if your car had been damaged while driving on loose gravel and tar laid down by the highway department. Health/medicine packages had the most empowering information. Five of the six packages contained empowering information. Three of the six crime/court packages, two of the three nature packages, and each of the two weather packages contained empowering information. Only one of the six education packages and one of the six economy/business packages contained empowering information.

Coder Reliability

When coders placed news stories in one of the 17 topic categories, coder reliability between Coder 1 and Coder 2 was 83 percent, between Coder 2 and Coder 3 was 82 percent, and between Coder 2 and Coder 3 was 76 percent using Holsti's formula. Since the coders had to select one of 17 possibilities, coder reliability for topic categories was adequate. When the news stories that provided an opportunity for citizen action were analyzed, coder reliability between Coder 1 and Coder 2 was 95 percent, between Coder 1 and Coder 3 was 88 percent, and between Coder 2 and Coder 3 was 89 percent, when using Holsti's formula. For the user-friendliness of news stories, coder reliability between Coder 1 and Coder 2 was 93 percent, between Coder 1 and Coder 3 was 85 percent, and between Coder 2 and Coder 3 was 88 percent, again using Holsti's formula. This content analysis illustrates the limited amount of empowering information found in local television news. The following research will reveal why that is the case.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION & IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The content analysis highlighted the limited amount of empowering information found in local television news stories. Although there are numerous reasons why this is so, the participant observation and in-depth interviews revealed three principal reasons. These reasons are: 1) the absence of a concerted commitment from the news organization to provide empowering information; 2) newsworkers' lack of enterprise; and 3) the newsworkers' perception of viewers and what those viewers want. The following sections will expand on these findings. The news production values, routines, and organizational structures employed at this station led to these findings.

In order for there to be a concerted effort to provide empowering information to viewers, a written newsroom philosophy making empowering information a priority would be necessary. At this station, there was no written philosophy or mission statement to guide the newsworkers in any direction, and because of this, they tended to fall back on the station's long-standing "Partners Against Crime" commitment. As reported, 47 (24 percent) of the 194 stories that aired were crime/court stories. In addition, because the station did not have a mission statement, newsworkers tended to define themselves by who they were not, most often comparing themselves to the city's top-rated station. The newsworkers did not think very highly of this station, and most believed that the station "censored" its news. However, research indicates that viewers are more interested in city government and education stories than

crime/court stories. The checklist that the top-rated station uses to determine what crime stories are eligible for the air means that fewer crime/court stories are done.

Lacking a mission statement, the newsworkers also relied on the station's news consultants to help define who they were. These consultants encouraged going "live" at every opportunity, bundling similar elements into mini-blocks of news, and sending an anchor out into the field to report live from the scene during the newscast. Consultants also asked newsworkers to include "news you can use" in their stories, but it became clear that consultants' definition of "news you can use" is questionable. For example, throughout the trial coverage of a teen accused of murdering a toddler, full-screen graphics provided detailed timelines. One headline read "Timeline [Defendant]" and was followed by four bullet points: •May 24—[Victim] dies, •May 30—[Defendant] charged, •July 29—Proceedings begin, •August 5—Both sides rest. Factoids, rather than empowering information, were given to the viewers. In addition, newsworkers were hampered by the amount of time the consultants gave them to do stories. Packages were limited to one minute and 15 seconds. As reported, nineteen (39 percent) of the 49 packages contained empowering information. This means that six out of ten packages were bereft of empowering information. More time did not necessarily mean more information. This was especially true for the station's top stories—stories that air at the beginning of the newscast and are given more time—where only two (10 percent) of the twenty contained any empowering information.

Because the station lacked a written philosophy endorsing news that provides an opportunity for citizen action, the newsworkers tended to think that it was not their job to provide empowering information. Their justifications included not wanting to insult the intelligence of the viewer by hand-holding them or telling the viewer what to do. They also said that viewers needed to take personal responsibility for their own education, but their own responsibility as journalists to inform and educate was not acknowledged. Finally, newsworkers heralded the limitations of television by saying things like, "It's only TV!," discounting or not recognizing television's tremendous transmission and ritual influence on viewers.

The second reason empowering information is not included in local television newscasts is because of the lack of enterprise on the part of the newsworkers. Newsworkers did little to develop their own stories, beats, and sources. In addition, a premium was placed on spot news. Finally, newsworkers tended to fall back on their own personal experiences and pet peeves rather than developing stories that addressed the entire community. Not developing their own stories meant that the newsworkers relied on the assignments manager to feed them ideas. Newsworkers were found scavenging the fax machine and "creating" news to fill time as illustrated by the following story told by a reporter:

> It was about Christmas two years ago, and this duck had a dart in its head. Some kid had shot a dart at this duck. It was horrible. It was sad. I'm sorry. Whatever. But here was this duck and it was running around with a dart in its head. And the only reason we knew about it was because a photographer had been out there covering some other story, and he said, "Oh isn't that odd?" and he turned and took a picture of it. Well, they brought it back to the station, and as you've seen they often do, it's like, "Hey, you've got to take a look at this video!" And that became news. Well, my producer that night said, "Go out and do a live shot on that." And you know why? It was because it was around the holidays, and there was nothing else going on. So it was make it up,

> and make it happen and feed the beast. So I go out there, and I do this live shot, and I'm like, "I don't know if you can see it. It's really horrible. Blah, blah, blah. And neighbors are up in arms." That's okay—to a point. The next night, the producer said, "Go back. Wildlife Rescue is supposedly going to go out there and capture it." Well, the worst part was that I went back out there, and the dart had fallen out of the duck's head. So here's this duck swimming around, and the dart had fallen out of its head, and it's fine. I mean, it's still a shame, and it's still just awful that some kid threw a dart in this duck's head, but I mean, come on. I'm like, "You're still going live with it.?" It's still news, because we don't have anything else to fill this time with, and even though there is no story anymore, do it. So that was live for the sake of being live, and that was doing a story to feed the beast. And unfortunately, that happens a lot. You see stations doing it. We are guilty of it. Every single news station is guilty of it, and the paper is guilty of trumping up something stupid for the sake of news.

A loose, almost non-existent, beat system also contributed to the newsworkers' lack of enterprise, as did the newsworkers' perception that meetings are boring. Producers had to beg reporters to attend meetings. In addition, newsworkers appeared to goof off quite a bit, which seemed to contradict their belief that they did not have enough time to develop stories, beats, and/or sources. Another reason newsworkers were not encouraged to enterprise stories was because the station placed a high value on spot news. Because of this, reporters would pray for spot news, which does not require any planning or research. Newsworkers were constantly on standby, poised for disaster to occur. The news director's unwritten philosophy, "Whatever it takes. Whenever it breaks," illustrated the priority given spot news. Finally, instead of enterprising stories, reporters and producers tended to fall back on their own personal experiences and pet peeves. Ideas found on the way into work or in their own backyards became news. The danger in this is the lack of representation the entire city received since most of the newsworkers lived in the more affluent parts of town. In addition, rather than enterprising stories that included empowering information, reporters and producers tended to fall back on stories similar to ones that they had done in the past. Producers would tell reporters what they should bring back for their stories, and reporters would ask questions to make sure the answers fit the story they wanted to tell.

The final reason empowering information is left out of local television newscasts is because of the newsworkers' perception of their viewers and what those viewers want. The newsworkers' interaction with viewers, how newsworkers assemble stories for viewers, and the newsworkers' perception of why viewers watch local television news make up this final reason.

Newsworkers seem to have a pretty low opinion of viewers, and in the newsworkers' defense, viewers who call the station do not do much to improve that opinion. Viewers who call either want help fixing something, or they want to complain about something they have seen on the air. The assistant news director did acknowledge the station's role in helping to shape their viewers:

> The people that call me scare me, because I think, 'Oh my God! You're a viewer!' And the things that they are really interested in, you would be amazed. What they think is news. They lump us right in there with 'Hard Copy' and 'Inside Edition.' And I'd like to think that we're not like that, but by the same token. . .We had a big discussion about these kid sexual harassment stories [kids getting into trouble for kissing other kids], and my personal feeling is that it is being blown out of proportion by the media. That it's stupid, and I think that if we stopped covering it, it would go away. . .I mean we put a lot of stuff like that on. Do people care? They talk about it. Yeah, but that doesn't mean that we have to tell them about it.

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment

When newsworkers are putting together stories for their viewers, they keep four things in mind: 1) the viewers' perceived short attention span; 2) finding what interests and affects people; 3) television's visual nature; and 4) people and emotion. Local television news workers think that they are offering their viewers "fast food" for their brains. More weight is given to stories that interest rather than to stories that educate or have impact. Part of the reason this is so is because of television's visual nature. Reporters are constantly on the look out for what will look good on TV. Stories that are considered newspaper stories are not done, as demonstrated by this reporter's view:

> I wasn't real big on visuals until I got here, but this is tele*vision*, and you need to make it as visual as you can. And I truly do believe, and I never believed this before, that there are some stories that are better left in the newspaper. That they can get every single aspect, every single perspective in there, and it's wonderful, because it's visually poor. But then, you have TV, and there are some stories that they can't touch. And the challenge for me on a pretty much day-to-day basis is how to make the story that I've come up with, or that I've been assigned to, how to make it visual. How to make it appeal to the eye and to the mind as well, because, sometimes it's not so much of what you are saying to the people. It's what they are seeing that they remember.

Finally, if a story does not have a good people angle, it is not given "the full-blown package treatment." Meaning, it is not given as much time. And, if a people story contains emotion, especially tears, all the better. Newsworkers believe that the number one reason people watch local television newscasts is for the weather. Here's what the news director said:

> . . .[weather is] one of the battlegrounds we've chosen to really try and win. Technology can do so much for you. . . and we've gotten some pretty fancy new toys in the last year to try to help us tell people, help people stay up on what the weather is. And during the drought when we didn't have a lot of weather, the drought still became a pretty compelling story so that when there was rain on the horizon, or rain on the doppler, people knew exactly what to look for. And so, we've made that a battle ground, and as a result, we've also made that a real topic of conversation, a real topic of discussion.

In addition to the amount of time given to weather in its own segment, there were 15 weather stories that aired in the news segment during the month, the same number of local politics and government stories that aired. If the same resources were devoted to empowering information's inclusion, citizens would be able to keep up with issues that impact their lives. Instead of making weather—something that citizens have little or no control over— a real topic of conversation, imagine what it would be like if citizens were able to "exercise their control" and make issues and events that impact their lives a real topic of conversation.

I believe that the reason empowering information does not appeal to local television newsworkers' values and routines is because they have never thought about doing it this way before. It is not the way television news has been done or is done. However, if the station were to adopt empowering information as its overarching philosophy; give reporters time to develop stories, sources and beats; reduce the importance placed on spot news; realize that newspaper stories can be television stories; reconfigure their newscast's rundown to allow for more time to do stories in-depth; and stop underestimating the needs and desires of their viewers; then I believe that local television news could

play a great role in empowering an informed and active public. If not, then local television news is not living up to its fullest potential.

Discussion

This case study of a local television news station confirmed the lack of empowering information presented in local television news and offered three main reasons why this is so. These reasons are 1) the absence of a concerted commitment by the news organization to provide empowering information; 2) newsworkers' lack of enterprise; and 3) the newsworkers' perception of viewers and what those viewers want. This study's strength and weaknesses will be discussed below.

This study's main strength is the qualitative method of research—the case study—that I selected to delve into local television news and empowering information. Through a content analysis of local television news stories, participant observation at a local television news station, and in-depth interviews with local television newsworkers, I was able to assemble complementary and overlapping measures of the same phenomena, which makes the validity of this study very strong. This triangulation of methods is a holistic research approach that provides great detail. Although qualitative researchers have a difficult time claiming reliability, I believe that future researchers will find the same sorts of things that I found, since I observed many of the same things earlier researchers found in their local television news studies.

I believe that the month I spent in the local television newsroom was the most important piece of this case study. The content analysis provided quantitative proof that empowering information is lacking on local television news, and the in-depth interviews fleshed out or confirmed information that was gained in the field, but the participant observation gave me the opportunity to see newsworkers in action and to observe the process of local television news. From that experience, I was able to ask better in-depth interview questions. In addition, the research participants were familiar with me from my time at the station, and they were comfortable and open during the interview process. Because of the participant observation, I was also able to compare what I had seen happen with the newsworkers' impressions of what happens in a local television newsroom.

An additional strength of this study is that it revealed contradictory beliefs held by the newsworkers. For example, many newsworkers derided the city's top-rated news station for "censoring" its news by not providing crime coverage of certain stories. However, the station I studied also "censors" its news every time it decides what story is not going to make it onto the air. Since research shows that viewers are interested in learning more about education and city government, I believe that not providing more news of this kind is a form of censorship. Another contradictory belief held by the newsworkers was that they did not have enough time to cover stories, yet much of the month was spent bemoaning the fact there was little news going on. Instead of casting for stories at the last minute or praying for spot news to fill space, time could be spent planning stories and giving reporters time to develop them. Another contradiction was that some newsworkers believed that empowering information would tell people what to do, and that was not what they were supposed to do. The contradictory nature of this belief was demonstrated when one reporter said, "We can't tell people what to do, although we do

sometimes, in a way." By providing empowering information, newsworkers are not telling people what to do; they are only giving their viewers an opportunity for action. Viewers may choose not to act, or they may choose to act. The decision is up to the viewer. Not providing the information means that viewers are not given the opportunity to decide. Not providing the information means that newsworkers make the decision not to act for the viewer. Viewers cannot act if they are not informed. Finally, several newsworkers exhorted viewers to take personal responsibility for their own education. The contradiction here is that people cannot take responsibility for their education if they are not aware of what issues and concerns are present. A proposed low-level nuclear waste site is a good example. If viewers do not know that this dump may be built in their state, they do not know to educate themselves.

Another strength of this study is the new insight that was generated on an under-studied subject. Lemert's 1981 study was the only one that researched whether or not local television news gave citizens what he calls mobilizing information. His study revealed that local television news did not provide citizens with much mobilizing information, and this study showed that more than 15 years later citizens are still not provided much empowering information. Since Americans say that local television news is their main source of information, the findings of this study are very important.

This study's weaknesses include the use of a lone observer. The study would have been stronger if a team of observers had accompanied me to this local television news station like Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade did for their study, "The News Factory." It can be argued, however, that a team of observers would have caused more commotion than a single observer, and that the newsworkers would have been more on guard and not as open. In addition, though I was by myself, many of my findings were consistent with findings in previous local television news studies by Berkowitz, Kaniss, and McManus, and previous media sociology studies by Breed, Epstein, and Tuchman, to name a few.

Another weakness was the use of a single television news station. This study would have been stronger if I had been a participant observer at several local television news stations instead of just one. Future research in different cities and at different stations will contribute to the research begun here. In defense of this weakness, previous local television news studies have revealed that local television news stations are more similar than different, despite geography and market size. Stations air the same types of stories across markets, they are ratings-driven, and they are constrained by a variety of resources, namely time, money, and employees.

Finally, the definition of empowering information that I used—1) provides an opportunity for future citizen action in a concrete way, and 2) is user-friendly—was not as strong as it could have been. For example, ten of the crime stories that aired asked viewers to help locate a criminal suspect. Since these stories provided a concrete opportunity for citizen action, they were coded "yes," that they did contain empowering information. In reality, these stories are probably disempowering in that they may scare viewers, prompting them to lock their doors and stay inside. The local politics and government stories provide another example of why the definition I used could have been stronger. Eight of the 15 local politics and government stories contained empowering information according to my definition, but three of those eight stories concerned new speed limits and other boating regulations for area lakes. I do not

consider boating to be a compelling issue of our day. Of the five remaining local politics and government stories, only one story on an upcoming city council meeting truly seemed to contain empowering information and that information was only partly user-friendly. Operationalizing a more stringent empowering information definition—one that favors the coverage of compelling issues of our day—will be difficult, but I think it needs to be done.

If citizens are indeed the only safe depository of the ultimate powers of society as Jefferson believed, then it is up to the news media—especially the local television news media—to assist in the public's enlightenment. I believe that the provision of empowering information is one of the ways enlightenment can occur. Not providing empowering information means that it will not occur, but providing empowering information means that it might. People need to be reminded that they are citizens, that they have a say in how this country is run, and that their involvement is what democracy is all about. It is my hope that this study will prompt local television newsworkers and their organizations to reconsider how they define news. I also hope that journalism educators will change how they teach their students news reporting and writing. My sincerest hope, however, is that all citizens whose discretion needs to be informed will benefit from this research.

Local Television News and Viewer Empowerment

Bibliography

News '93: An Exclusive Survey of RTNDA Members. Broadcasting & Cable, September 27, 1993, p. 47.

Abbott, E. A., & Brassfield, L. T. (1989). Comparing Decisions on Releases by TV and Newspaper Gatekeepers. Journalism Quarterly, 66(4), pp. 853-856.

Anderson, R., Dardenne, R., & Killenberg, G. M. (1994). The Conversation of Journalism: Communication, Community, and News. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.

Arbetter, S. (1992, February). The Art of Empowerment. Current Health 2, p. 18.

Atwater, T. (1986). Consonance in Local Television News. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30(4), pp. 467-472.

Bantz, C. R., McCorkle, S., & Baade, R. C. (1980). The News Factory. Communication Research, 7(1), pp. 45-68.

Bartlett, D. (1993, September). Bad News: Viewers Like It. American Journalism Review, p. 20.

Berkowitz, D. (1990). Refining the Gatekeeping Metaphor for Local Television News. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34(1), pp. 55-68.

Berkowitz, D. (1991). Assessing Forces in the Selection of Local Television News. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 35(2), pp. 245-251.

Berkowitz, D. (1993). Work Roles and News Selection in Local TV: Examining the Business-Journalism Dialectic. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 37(1), pp. 67-81.

Berkowitz, D., & Adams, D. B. (1990). Information Subsidy and Agenda-Building in Local Television News. Journalism Quarterly, 67(4), pp. 723-731.

Bernstein, J. M., & Lacy, S. (1992). Contextual Coverage of Government by Local Television News. Journalism Quarterly, 69(2), pp. 329-340.

Blumer, H. (1969). Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Methods. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Breed, W. (1955). Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis. Social Forces, 33(4), pp. 326-335.

Breed, W. (1958). Mass Communication and Socio-Cultural Integration. Social Forces, 37(2), pp. 109-116.

Burdick, M. (1995, August). A Serious Taskmaster: An Interview with Peter Jennings, ABC anchorman and this year's winner of RTNDA's highest honor, the Paul White Award. Communicator, pp. 10-14.

Carey, J. (1989; rpt. 1992). Communication as Culture. New York: Routledge.

Carroll, R. L., Tuggle, C. A., McCollum, J. F., Mitrook, M. A., Arlington, K. J., & Hoerner, J. M. (1995,). Consonance in Local Television News Program Content: An Examination of National Diversity. Paper presented at the Broadcast Education Association, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Chaffee, S. H., & Schleuder, J. (1986). Measurement and Effects of Attention to Media News. Human Communication Research, 13(1), pp. 76-107.

Cronkite, W. (1976). Remarks at CBS Affiliates Conference, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California. In M. Barrett (Ed.), Rich News, Poor News: Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Survey of Broadcast Journalism, p. 189. New York: Columbia University.

Dahlgren, P. (1995). Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeFleur, M. (1993, Winter). Enablement of the Media. CT&M: A Newsletter for the Communication Theory & Methodology Division, 22, p. 4.

Delia, J. G. (1987). Communication Research: A History. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), Handbook of Communication Science, pp. 20-98. Newbury Park: Sage.

Dervin, B. (1989). Public Communication Campaigns. In R. E. Rice & C. K. Atkin (Eds.), (2nd ed., pp. pp. 67-86). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

DuBrow, R. (1993, March 13). Media Literacy 101: Empowering the Viewer. Los Angeles Times, p. F15.

Epstein, E. J. (1973). News from Nowhere: Television and the News. New York: Random House.

Feagin, J. R., Orum, A. M., & Sjoberg, G. (Eds.). (1991). A Case for the Case Study. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Fibich, L. (1995). Under Seige. American Journalism Review, September, pp. 16-23.

Fishman, M. (1980). Manufacturing the News. Austin: The University of Texas Press.

Fouhy, E. (1994). Is "Civic" Journalism the Answer? Communicator, May, pp. 18-19.

Fouhy, E. (1994, January 10). Toward a New Agenda in TV News. Broadcasting & Cable, p. 32.
Fouhy, E. M. (1995, August). A Sense of Community. Communicator, pp. 15-16.
Gans, J. H. (1979). Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time. New York: Random House.
Gitlin, T. (1980). The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Glasgow University Media Group. (1976). Bad News. London: Routledge & K. Paul.
Gove, P. B. (Ed.). (1971). Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company.
Graber, D. (1988). Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide. White Plains, NJ: Longman.
Griffin, M. (1992). Looking at Television News: Strategies for Research. Communication, 13, p. 121.
Guralnik, D. B. (Ed.). (1982). Webster's New World Dictionary, Compact School and Office Edition. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Hagan, M. (1992, Fall). Murrow Symposium: FCC Chair Lays Out TV Industry's Shortcomings. The Murrow Communicator.
Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. New York: Pantheon.
Holley, J. (1996, May/June). Should the coverage fit the crime? A Texas TV station tries to resist the allure of mayhem. Columbia Journalism Review, pp. 27-32.
Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). We Make the Road by Walking. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Hoyt, M. (1995, September/October). Are You Now, or Will You Ever Be, A Civic Journalist? Columbia Journalism Review, pp. 27-33.
Hungerford, S. E., & Lemert, J. B. (1973). Covering the Environment: A New 'Afghanistanism'? Journalism Quarterly, 50(3), pp. 475-481, 508.
Iyengar, S. (1991). Is Anyone Responsible? Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). News That Matters: Television and American Opinion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Kaniss, P. (1991). Making Local News. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Keefer, J. D. (1993). The News Media's Failure to Facilitate Citizen Participation in the Congressional Policymaking Process. Journalism Quarterly, 70(2), pp. 412-424.
Klite, P., Bardwell, R. A., & Salzman, J. (1995). A Day in the Life of Local TV News in America. Denver, CO: Rocky Mountain Media Watch.
Kolbert, E. (1993, October 2). Dan Rather criticizes telelvision news programs. Austin American-Statesman, p. B6.
Ledbetter, J. (1997, October 16). Bad News: The slow, sad sellout of journalism. Rolling Stone, p. 73.
Lemert, J. B. (1981). Does Mass Communication Change Public Opinion After All? A New Approach to Effects Analysis. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
Lemert, J. B. (1984). News Context and the Elimination of Mobilizing Information: An Experiment. Journalism Quarterly, 61(2), pp. 243-249.
Lemert, J. B., & Ashman, M. G. (1983). Extent of Mobilizing Information in Opinion and News Magazines. Journalism Quarterly, 60(4), pp. 657-662.
Lemert, J. B., & Larkin, J. P. (1979). Some Reasons Why Mobilizing Information Fails to be in Letters to the Editor. Journalism Quarterly, 56(3), pp. 504-512.
Lemert, J. B., Mitzman, B. N., Seither, M. A., Cook, R. H., & Hackett, R. (1977). Journalists and Mobilizing Information. Journalism Quarterly, 54(4), pp. 721-726.
Lind, R. A. (1995). How Can TV News Be Improved?: Viewer Perceptions of Quality and Responsibility. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 39(3), pp. 360-375.
Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
McLeod, D. M., & Perse, E. M. (1994). Direct and Indirect Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Public Affairs Knowledge. Journalism Quarterly, 71(2), pp. 433-442.
McManus, J. H. (1991). How Objective is Local Television News? Mass Com Review, Summer, pp. 21-48.
McManus, J. H. (1994). Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Minow, N. N. (1961, May 9). The "Vast Wasteland". Paper presented at the National Association of Broadcasters, Washington, D.C.

Minow, N. N. (1990). Why is the Medium so Rarely Well Done? Peabody! The Annual of the George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Awards.

Neuman, W. R., Just, M. R., & Crigler, A. N. (1992). Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Perloff, R. M., Wartella, E. A., & Becker, L. B. (1982). Increasing Learning From TV News. Journalism Quarterly, 59(1), pp. 83-86.

Perse, E. M. (1990). Media Involvement and Local News Effects. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34(1), pp. 17-36.

Price, V., & Zaller, J. (1993). Who Gets the News? Alternative Measure of News Reception and Their Implications for Research. Public Opinion Quarterly, 57, pp. 133-146.

Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of Empowerment/Exemplars of Prevention: Toward a Theory for Community Psychology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 15(2), pp. 121-148.

Richmond, R. (1994, December 13). Brokaw sees need in media to cover the 'other news'. Austin American-Statesman, p. B6.

Robinson, J. P., & Davis, D. K. (1990). Television News and the Informed Public: An Information Processing Approach. Journal of Communication, 40(3), pp. 106-119.

Robinson, J.P., & Levy, M.R. (1986). The Main Source: Learning from Television News. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Rosen, J. (1992). Making Politics Work: Journalists and the Public Share Responsibility. Media & Values(58), pp. 10-12.

Rosen, J. (1994). Public Journalism as a Democratic Art. Paper presented at the Project on Public Life and the Press Fall Seminar at the American Press Institute, Reston, Virginia.

Rosen, J., & Merritt, D. J. (1994). Public Journalism: Theory and Practice. Dayton, Ohio: The Kettering Foundation.

Rosenblum, M. (1993). Who Stole the News? Why We Can't Keep Up With What Happens in the World and What We Can Do About It. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Rossow, M. D., & Dunwoody, S. (1991). Inclusion of "Useful" Detail in Newspaper Coverage of High-Level Nuclear Waste Siting Controversy. Journalism Quarterly, 68(1/2), pp. 87-100.

Rottenberg, D. (1994, May). And That's the Way It Is. American Journalism Review, pp. 34-37.

Schor, J. B. (1991). The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure. New York: BasicBooks.

Schultz, M. R. (1993). The Effect of Visual Presentation, Story Complexity and Story Familiarity on Recall and Comprehension of Television News. Unpublished Dissertation, Indiana University.

Slattery, K. L., & Hakanen, E. (1994). Sensationalism Versus Public Affairs Content of Local TV News: Pennsylvania Revisited. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 38(2), pp. 205-216.

Smith, C. (1988). News Critics, News Workers and Local Television News. Journalism Quarterly, 65(2), pp. 341-346.

Tuchman, G. (1978). Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality. New York: The Free Press.

Turow, J. (1984). Media Industries: The Production of News and Entertainment. New York: Longman.

White, D. M. (1950). The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News. Journalism Quarterly, 27, pp. 383-390.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (1991). Mass Media Research: An Introduction. (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Zimmerman, M. (1990). Taking Aim on Empowerment Research: On the Distinction Between Individual and Psychological Conceptions. American Journal of Community Psychology, 18(1), pp. 169-177.

For the Ear to Hear: Conversational Writing On the Network Television News Magazines

Paper submitted to the RTVJ division of AEJMC
FACULTY SUBMISSION

C.A. Tuggle
Suzanne Huffman
Dana Rosengard

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Department of Journalism
Texas Christian University

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

July 10, 2000

C.A. Tuggle
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
CB 3365
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Ph. 919-962-5694
FAX: 919-962-0620
catuggle@unc.edu

Suzanne Huffman
Department of Journalism
TCU Box 298060
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, TX 76129

Ph. 817-257-6557
FAX: 817-257-7322
s.huffman@tcu.edu

Dana Rosengard
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
CB 3365
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Ph. 919-967-6680

danar@unc.edu

For the Ear to Hear: Conversational Writing

on the Network Television News Magazines

Television news viewers tell audience researchers that they prefer stories that are "told in a way that is simple, clear and easy to understand." Viewers rank this preference as one of the top reasons they choose any particular television news program. This preference for hearing stories that are "simple, clear and easy to understand" ranks higher in audience research results than a preference for live coverage of breaking news or viewers' regard for particular on-air personalities. (Personal conversation with Hollis Grizzard, Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc., March 4, 2000.) In order to produce stories that are simple, clear and easy for viewers to understand, writers must generate scripts that are written using simple, clear, precise language, so the story is being told in a conversational way. News directors are concerned about writing skills and cite the need to be a good writer as one of their top priorities when they look to hire new employees (Davis & Ziegler, 1996).

Writing in clear, understandable language is important from a theoretical as well as from a practical standpoint. Semiotic theory holds that because our view of reality is embedded in the language we use, effective communication depends on the use of an accepted set of symbols, with language the foremost set of symbols. An impediment to effective communication is that, as communicators, we often do not say exactly what we mean (Eco, 1976). A command of the language is of utmost necessity for television journalists to be sure they have made their meaning clear for viewers, who are exposed to the material only once.

Broadcast television is a "cool" medium. News viewers do not attend to it with the same intimacy and attention they give a "hot" medium such as a newspaper (McLuhan, 1964). Viewers simply will not "work" to understand a television news story in a way they might "work" to understand a newspaper article. Because broadcasters "speak into the air" and viewers have few means to call back what is spoken for review, news writers are faced with specific challenges when they begin to write broadcast scripts. Hence, professional news writers and broadcast news textbook authors (Bliss & Hoyt, 1994; Bliss & Patterson, 1971; Block, 1997; Hilliard, 1997; Tuggle, Carr & Huffman, 2000; Wilson, 1995) note that television news writers have only one chance to be understood and have described the elements of what makes clear and understandable broadcast writing: short sentences, simple but precise words and sentences, grammatically correct sentences (subject/verb in agreement, pronoun/antecedent in agreement, modifiers correctly placed), conversational language including the use of contractions, and active-voice verbs. They will tell you, in essence, that good broadcast writing is "conversational English on good behavior" (Prato, 1995). One network reporter says he understood what makes good broadcast writing when he took his boss's advice to "'look through the picture window in your mind and tell me what's there'" (Dotson, 1985, p.viii).

The use of the language matters because how language is used is crucial to understanding. Reporters work with raw material -- the news -- which must be made not only interesting but accurate. And to make the news accurate, "the reporter must use sound grammar" (Callahan, 1969, p.7). Callahan says, "Putting words together to make

sentences ... is the basic job of the journalist, and grammar is simply the correct use of words in sentences" (Callahan, 1969, p. 8). Block advises, "Start sentences with the subject, go straight to the verb, then the object.... The closer the verb follows the subject, the easier for the listener to follow" (Block, 1997, p.38).

Bliss and Patterson add, "Generally, shorter sentences are easier to read and easier to understand" (Bliss and Patterson, 1971, p. 6). And Hilliard recommends that writers "be simple and direct. Use words of two syllables instead of three.... Choose words that are familiar to everyone in the audience" (Hilliard,1997, p. 48).

Much has been written about readability and how print reporters should write in a way that makes it easy for most members of the population to understand what they read in newspapers, magazines, and other printed material. Readability scales take a number of factors into account, including sentence length, average number of syllables per word, and the percentage of passive sentences the writer used. One of the earliest scales, the Flesch readability scale (1949, 1974), was developed more than 50 years ago and has been used by newspaper and magazine writers as they try to make their copy more readable for a broader and more diverse audience. The Flesch scale is even included in the spelling and grammar review section of Word for Windows. Those who write articles or term papers can use the program to check for spelling and grammar errors, and get a print out of the factors that make up the Flesch scale, as well as a related grade-level reading ease score.

Numerous researchers and writers for the popular press have examined the readability of newspaper copy and have pointed to difficult copy as one reason why readership continues to decline. In the five decades since Flesch developed the first

readability scale, numerous academic studies have documented ponderous leads (Catalano, 1990), long, rambling sentences (Stapler, 1985), and readability scores consistently as high as 16 (Danielson & Bryan, 1964; Hoskins, 1973; Wanta & Gao, 1994), which is high enough to require the reader to have completed college to fully comprehend the story.

Textbook authors point out that broadcast writing is intended to be heard rather than read by the audience, but the factors that make up readability scales certainly also apply to text written for the ear. As is the case with newspaper readers, television news viewers would find it difficult to follow long, rambling sentences filled with six-syllable words and grammatical errors. But, in addition to the factors that make up readability scales, there are other factors that writing experts suggest are important to conversational broadcast writing. Broadcast news writers have to make sentences short, with clear subject/verb connections, in active voice, in everyday language that is "on good behavior," and understandable the first time they are heard. Broadcast writing texts repeatedly suggest a number of elements that contribute to conversational broadcast writing: the writing must be simple, clear, accurate, coherent, and grammatically correct.

Viewers are pressed for time, with remote controls at the ready and multiple channels from which to choose. Add to that increased competition from computer-based media, and it is easy to understand why broadcast managers are finding it harder than ever to attract and keep an audience. But the opposite seems to be true of network news magazines, as the number of such programs has increased in recent years and as these shows continue to grow in popularity. The CBS news magazine "60 Minutes" debuted in 1968. Now the lineup at CBS also includes "60 Minutes II" and "48 Hours." ABC has

combined its news magazines under the "20/20" umbrella and now airs the versions of "20/20" four nights a week. NBC airs "Dateline NBC" just as often. These news magazines often win their nightly time slots, drawing a greater number of viewers than competing entertainment shows. Don Hewitt, who created "60 Minutes," has developed it into the highest-rated news program on television, the first ever to break into Nielsen's top 10 ("Top shows," 1998). Hewitt says the formula for the program is simple --"tell me a story" ("Editorial," 1998). That "telling" is supposed to be delivered in a conversational way, through writing that is designed to be heard.

Research Questions

Writing for the eye to read (readability) is measured by the Flesch scale; no comparable scale exists to measure conversational writing for the ear to hear. The Flesch reading-ease scale has been tested and accepted for more than 50 years. Print writers have used it to help them determine if they are meeting the needs of their readers, but nothing comparable exists that will help broadcast writers check their scripts to see if they have adhered to the tenets of conversational writing. The purpose of this research is to examine the writing in network news magazines, in part to determine if a scale to assess conversational writing would be useful to broadcast media practitioners. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

R1: What reading-ease differences exist between entire stories (including interview sound bites and natural sound clips) and the written narration tracks and anchor introductions and tags to these stories? (In other words, do broadcast writers use short

words and sentences that are "conversational" to the same degree as the interview sound bites and natural sound clips?)

R2: What, if any, writing differences exist between and among network news magazine programs?

R3: How well do writers of news magazine stories conform to accepted standards of broadcast news writing style?

R4: How comparable are measures of "readability" and "conversational writing style" when applied to broadcast news magazines?

Method

This study encompassed network prime time news magazine programs from each of the three major broadcast networks: ABC, CBS, and NBC. These programs were chosen for study rather than the nightly newscasts as they typically entail less deadline pressure on writers as a function of the larger producing, associate producing, and writing pools assigned to them. In addition, although some of the shows are approaching nightly status, for the most part they appear less frequently than the evening newscasts do, giving journalists more time to polish their work. Finally, these shows were chosen on the basis of higher ratings and larger audiences than their evening news counterparts. The sample consisted of all such programs for the three networks during the first four weeks of the new 1999-2000 broadcast season, encompassing the dates of September 19, 1999, to October15, 1999. During this time period, ABC aired 14 "20/20" programs, CBS aired a total of 12 programs ("60 Minutes," "60 Minutes II," and "48 Hours"), and NBC aired 15 installments of "Dateline." The unit of analysis was the reporter story, defined as any

story that included recorded narration. The researchers content analyzed 112 reporter stories: 42 from ABC, 30 from CBS, and 40 from NBC.

Coding included the date, slug (title), show, network, and version of the story. The researchers acquired the full text version of the shows from transcript services. That version included the written narration, natural sound clips, and interview snippets, along with the written introductions and tags from the studio anchors. Video cues, teases of upcoming stories, and specialty features such as viewer comments and "Dateline Timeline" were removed by the researchers, as were question and answer segments between the anchors and the correspondents. The researchers then created a second version of the stories, removing natural sound clips and interview snippets (sound bites) as well as everything that was previously removed from version one. Hence, version two contained only written elements of the story (narration and anchor lead-ins and tags).

Each of the two versions was analyzed for reading ease using Flesch readability statistics, resulting in a distinct reading ease score for each version of each story. The researchers also coded version two of each story to account for instances of subject/verb disagreement, pronoun/antecedent disagreement (or unclear pronoun reference), percentage of passive sentences, misplaced modifiers, incorrect word usage, separation of the subject and the verb, the ratio of contractions used to the times it was possible to use a contraction, and instances in which the meaning of the sentence was difficult to discern. The final factor was labeled "syntax."

To check inter-coder reliability, a trained graduate student coded two scripts from each network. The six scripts (and all others) had previously been coded by the lead author. Initial comparison of the 174 items included in the six scripts yielded an inter-

coder agreement rate of 88.51%. Most of the discrepancy was regarding whether certain errors should be included in the word use or the syntax category. A second round of coding rectified the discrepancies.

Once the content was thus coded, the researchers designed a scale to measure how well the stories conformed to the elements of broadcast style listed above. Five factors (subject/verb, pronoun, modifiers, syntax, and word use) were listed as rates per 1000 words. Percentage of passive sentences was listed on a sliding scale, with 1-3 percent re-coded as 1, 3.01 to 6 percent re-coded as 2, and so on, up to more than 30 percent passive sentences re-coded as 11. (See Table 1) The ratio of contractions was re-coded such that 0.9 and above was zero, 0.8 to .899 was re-coded as 1, and so on through 0.1 to .199 re-coded as 9. (See Table 2)

The final factor, separation of the subject and verb, was listed as the rate of such separations per 1000 words multiplied by the degree of separation (the number of words between the subject and verb). A separation of 1-3 words was re-coded as 1, a 4-6 word separation was re-coded as 2, and so on. The highest number on this scale, 7, represented a separation of 19-21 words between subject and verb. (See Table 3)

The researchers then placed the combination of these eight measures on a 100 point scale, arriving at an overall conversational writing score by subtracting the sum of the numbers from 100. Tables 1 through 3 detail the re-coding scales, which were based on equal segments of the range of scores for each variable.

Table 1: **Re-coding scale/passive sentences**

Percentage of passive sentences	Re-coded score
0-3	1
3.01-6	2
6.01-9	3
9.01-12	4
12.01-15	5
15.01-18	6
18.01-21	7
21.01-24	8
24.01-27	9
27.01-30	10
30.01-higher	11

Table 2: **Re-coding scale/contraction ratio**

Percentage of contractions used	Re-coded score
0.9 or higher	0
0.8-.899	1
0.7-.799	2
0.6-.699	3
0.5-.599	4
0.4-.499	5
0.3-.399	6
0.2-.299	7
0.1-.199	8
0.0-.099	9

Table 3: **Re-coding scale/Subject-Verb Separation**

Words between Subject and verb	Re-coded Score
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-12	4
13-15	5
16-18	6
19-21	7

Findings and Discussion

First, the researchers sought to document any difference in reading ease based on the version of the story. Version one contained narration, sound bites, natural sound clips, and anchor leads and tags. Version two contained only narration and anchor elements. There was a significant difference between the two versions of the stories at each of the three networks. The average score of version one of the ABC stories was 77.98, but the average score dropped to 68.85 for version two [$F(1,82) = 35.78$, $p < .001$]. The scores

for the NBC stories also dropped significantly, from 78.07 to 71.12 [F (1,78) = 18.48, $p < .001$]. But by far the most noticeable decline in reading ease score from version one to version two was on the stories done by CBS. Though the network had the highest average reading ease score for version one, the scores dropped an average of more than 15 points when the writing was considered alone, from 80.01 to 64.48 [F (1,58) = 53.95, $p < .001$]. The range and standard deviation of the version two reading ease scores were greater for the CBS stories than for those from the other two networks, indicating greater variance in the version two scores for that network's stories.

The rank order of the networks by reading ease score was NBC, ABC, then CBS. Analysis of variance showed a significant difference between the reading ease scores of version two of the NBC stories (M =71.12) and version two of the CBS stories (M = 64.48) [F (2, 111) = 6.3, $p < .004$]. The difference between NBC and ABC and between ABC and CBS was not significant.

Flesch reading ease gives us an indication of the length of sentences and the number of syllables in those sentences. It appears that at all three networks, but particularly at CBS, the sound bites and natural sound clips chosen for inclusion contribute a great deal to reading ease. The written material does not. Table 4 details the reading ease scores for the two versions of the stories at each of the three networks.

Table 4: **Reading ease scores by network and version**

Network	*Reading ease Version 1*	*Reading ease Version 2*	*Range Version 2*	*Standard dev. Version 2*
ABC	77.98	68.85	36.3	7.40
CBS	80.01	64.48	41.7	9.05
NBC	78.07	71.12	30.8	7.15

Further analysis revealed a significant difference between the reading ease scores of specific shows [F (11,111) = 51.69, $p < .001$]. The average reading ease score for the CBS program "60 Minutes" was 57.73, significantly lower than the scores for all other shows in the sample except "20/20 Monday." The average score across networks was 68.49, so the reading ease score for "60 Minutes" was more than 10 points below the mean. There was no significant difference between any of the other individual programs and their counterparts.

The reading ease scores indicate that some of the writers of the scripts in the sample use short sentences and words in their stories. Two writers achieved scores in the 90s on the Flesch scale, another seven scored in the 80s. A "20/20 Friday" (ABC) story titled "Smart Employees" was highest on the Flesch scale, followed by a story titled "Dani" (CBS), which aired on "48 Hours." Conversely, 18 stories (16%) scored in the 50s or below on reading ease. Of the five lowest scores on the reading ease scale, four came from "60 Minutes" and the fifth from "Dateline Monday." Table 5 details the five lowest and five highest scores on the Flesch scale.

Table 5: **Highest and lowest scores on Flesch reading ease scale**

Top Five				***Bottom Five***			
Story	*Network*	*Show*	*Score*	*Story*	*Network*	*Show*	*Score*
Smart workers	ABC	20/20 Friday	93.4	Tubercu-losis	CBS	60 Min.	49.4
Dani	CBS	48 Hours	91.1	Blue wall	CBS	60 Min.	50.7
TV ad magic	NBC	Dateline Wed.	84.5	Alabama State U.	CBS	60 Min.	53.2
Driver training	NBC	Dateline Thurs.	84.3	Reagan	CBS	60 Min.	53.4
Baby signing	ABC	20/20 Monday	84.0	Kennedy	NBC	Dateline Monday	53.7

Next, the researchers correlated the reading ease scores of version two of the stories to the conversational writing scores of those stories. The investigators did not compute conversational writing scores for version one. Interview sources should not be held to the same high standards for language usage that trained journalists are. Hence, conversational writing scores were calculated for only the material written by a producer, anchor, or correspondent. Conversational writing scores took into account subject-verb disagreement, pronoun-antecedent disagreement (or unclear pronoun reference), percentage of passive sentences, incorrect word usage, instances of misplaced modifiers, instances of unclear meaning, instances and degree of subject-verb separation, and the ratio of contractions used to the number of times contractions were possible.

There was a significant correlation between reading ease scores and conversational writing scores ($r = .442$, $p < .001$), indicating that the two scales measure related concepts. The rank ordering of the networks was the same for the conversational writing scores as it was for reading ease scores: NBC, ABC, then CBS. The difference between NBC ($M = 91.76$) and CBS ($M = 86.68$) was statistically significant [$F(2, 111)$

= 7.11, $p < .002$. As was the case with reading ease, there was no significant difference between NBC and ABC, nor between ABC and CBS. The range and standard deviation of the conversational writing scores were greater for the stories from CBS than for the stories from the other two networks. Table 6 details the scores on the conversational writing scale by network.

Table 6: **Conversational writing scores by network**

Network	*Conversational Writing Score*	*Range*	*Standard deviation*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
ABC	88.16	26.02	6.03	71.60	97.62
CBS	86.68	28.23	6.87	71.77	100.00
NBC	91.76	19.86	4.92	80.14	100.00

There was also a difference in conversational writing scores by show [F (2,111) = 34.88, $p < .001$]. The scores for the CBS program "60 Minutes" were significantly lower than the scores for stories on "48 Hours," "Dateline Sunday," "Dateline Monday," "Dateline Tuesday," "Dateline Wednesday," and "20/20 Thursday."

In general, the conversational writing scores at the three networks were, as should be expected, relatively high. Writers of 55 of the 112 stories achieved a score of 90 or higher. Several were perfect or nearly so. Two stories, one from "Dateline Sunday" and one from "48 Hours," contained no examples of any of the writing problems outlined above. Both were relatively short stories, but analysis showed no significant correlation between word count and scores on either the reading ease or conversational writing scales. Three other much longer stories were nearly perfect on the latter scale. All of those were "Dateline" stories, but no two came from the same night of the week.

Though many of the scores were high, there were many that seemed lacking in elements of grammar, word usage, and style, as measured by our scale. Eleven stories (9.82 %) had scores in the 70s. Of the five lowest-scoring stories on the conversational writing scale, one was from "20/20 Friday," one was from "48 Hours," and three were from "60 Minutes." Table 7 details the five highest and five lowest scores on the conversational writing scale.

Table 7: **Highest and lowest scores on conversational writing scale**

Top Five				***Bottom Five***			
Story	*Network*	*Show*	*Score*	*Story*	*Network*	*Show*	*Score*
Mountain rescue	NBC	Dateline Sunday	100.00	Iodized salt	ABC	20/20 Friday	71.60
Dani	CBS	48 Hours	100.00	Tuber-culosis	CBS	60 Min.	71.77
Luda	NBC	Dateline Sunday	98.00	KKK	CBS	48 Hours	75.52
Amnesia	NBC	Dateline Tuesday	97.97	Dutch	CBS	60 Min.	75.80
British TV	NBC	Dateline Monday	97.95	Wolpert	CBS	60 Min.	76.21

Conclusions

There was little overlap between either the low individual scores or the high individual scores on either of the two scales. Only the "48 Hours" story "Dani" ranked in the top five in both reading ease and conversational writing, and only the "60 Minutes" story "Tuberculosis" was in the bottom five on both scales. Therefore, it appears that the majority of the journalists affiliated with the network news magazines either write short but do not pay particular attention to rules of grammar, word usage, and conversational writing, or do pay attention to those rules but tend to write using longer sentences and words with a higher-than-average number of syllables.

We can only speculate about the reasons for differences among networks in this study. Perhaps one network tries to appeal to an older, more educated audience, or perhaps the writers for those programs tend more frequently to come from print backgrounds, as was the norm in the early days of television. These writers would be the product of transition while a collection of writers, younger writers, at another network may have been specifically trained for broadcast and therefor more likely to be writing for the ear to hear. Also, it may seem incongruous that the top-rated magazine program, "60 Minutes" is the show that consistently ranks lowest on the two scales used in this study. Certainly, the formula to "just tell a story" used by the oldest of the news magazines has attracted a large number of loyal viewers. But the ratings for "60 Minutes" are likely due, at least in part, to other factors as well, such as brand recognition and longevity. It is conceivable the ratings could be even higher if the writers for the program more closely adhered to the guidelines of writing short, concise, grammatically correct sentences.

Regardless, the purpose of this study was not to disparage any particular network, show, or individual, but to point out that there appears to be room from improvement from every group of journalists writing for the various network television news magazines. They might be considered by some to be "the cream of the crop" of broadcast writers, hence, much should be expected of them. But all too often, it appears, writers for the magazine programs are not writing short, concise, grammatically correct sentences. This results in stories that the scales utilized in this study would indicate could be difficult to understand for many members of the audience. Additionally, failure to adhere to the tenets of good broadcast writing (many of which are often synonymous with the

tenets of good writing for any medium) results in stories that are disturbing for those who are students of the language and how it should be written for a broadcast audience.

Producers and correspondents appear to be selecting short sound bites containing common words, but perhaps are not doing quite as good a job at making their own writing easy to understand. So if the best in the business could improve in terms of using words correctly, employing the rules of good grammar, and writing in conversational style, it stands to reason that a conversational writing scale might prove useful to broadcast writers on any level.

All the networks, and local news operations as well, have the same goal: trying to attract the greatest number of viewers possible. Viewers tell audience researchers that they value clearly written, simple stories in their choice of news programs, so how stories are written is a key element in the ratings race. Those who write for television news must be wordsmiths, giving viewers stories they can understand after hearing them only once. Most news writers, even on the network level, churn out an enormous amount of material. Some stories are turned around in a matter of hours, some are worked on for weeks, but all should pass under the watchful eye of someone looking to make them both precise and concise. A conversational writing scale would help script editors and producers catch errors that are impediments to understanding, and therefore, potential impediments to better ratings.

Limitations

This study examines only writing style, and not how the writing and delivery of it are received. To develop a "listenability" scale would involve dissecting and discussing

issues such as dialects, accents, speech clarity, and the biological delivery systems. Though this is potentially useful, it is beyond the scope of this particular study. Also, had the study included scripts from nightly network newscasts or from local newscasts, the results might have varied from what the researchers found when considering network news magazines alone.

Suggestions for Further Research

Additional analyses of scripts from another season, and perhaps including CNN and Fox programming, would yield more information that would be helpful in further developing our conversational writing scale, as would samples from other types of news programs.

The Flesch scale has been tested and accepted for more than 50 years; our scale is in its infancy. It would be beneficial to show the stories from this sample or other network news magazine stories to an experimental group. That would allow us to determine if certain factors are greater impediments to understanding and "listening ease" than others are. Then regression analysis would show us whether the various factors in our scale should be differentially weighted, as is the case with the Flesch scale. Armed with that information, it would be possible to develop a computer-based conversational writing scale, similar in design to the Flesch scale.

References

Bliss, Edward, Jr., and Hoyt, James L. (1994.) Writing News for Broadcast. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bliss, Edward, Jr., and Patterson, John M. (1971.) Writing News for Broadcast. New York: Columbia University Press.

Block, Mervin. (1997.) Writing Broadcast News -- Shorter, Sharper, Stronger. Chicago: Bonus Books, Inc.

Callahan, E. L. (1969.) Grammar for Journalists. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company.

Catalano, Kevin. (1990.) On the wire: How six news services are exceeding readability standards. Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1990, pp. 97-103.

Danielson, Wayne, and Bryan, Sam. (1964.) Readability of wire stories in eight news categories. Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1964, pp. 105 -106.

Davis, Paul, and Ziegler, Dhyana. (1996.) Tomorrow's broadcast journalists: A Report and recommendations from The Jane Pauley Task Force on Mass Communication Education. Greencastle, Indiana: The Society of Professional Journalists.

Denbow, Carl. (1975.) Listenability and readability. Journalism Quarterly. Summer 1975. pp. 285-290.

Dotson, Bob. (1985.) ...In Pursuit of the American Dream. New York: Atheneum.

Eco, U. (1976). A theory of semiotics. Bloomington, IN.: University Press.

Editorial. (1998, March 23.) The Washington Weekly.

Flesch, Rudolf Franz. (1946.) The Art of Plain Talk. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

Flesch, Rudolf Franz. (1949.) The Art of Readable Writing. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

Flesch, Rudolf Franz. (1974.) The Art of Readable Writing: 25th Anniversary Edition. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Harwood, Ken. (1955.) Listenability and readability. Speech Monographs. v.22, pp.49-53, 57-59.

Hilliard, Robert L. (1997.) Writing for Television and Radio. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Hoskins, R. L. (1973.) A readability study of AP and UPI wire copy. Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1973, pp. 360 - 363.

McLuhan, Marshall. (1964.) Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Prato, Lou. (1995, November.) Bad writing plagues broadcast news. American Journalism Review. p. 46.

Stapler, Harry. (1985.) The one sentence/long sentence habits of writing leads and how it hurts readership. Newspaper Research Journal, Fall 1985, pp. 17-27.

Top shows for the 1997-98 season. (1998, May 26.) Broadcasting & Cable Online.

Tuggle, C. A., Carr, Forrest, and Huffman, Suzanne. (2000.) Broadcast News Handbook. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wanta, Wayne, and Gao, Dandan. (1994.) Young readers and the newspaper: Information recall and perceived enjoyment, readability, and attractiveness. Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1994, pp. 926 - 935.

Wilson, John M. (1995.) Writing for the Ear. Writer's Digest. April 1995, pp. 46-48.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the level of adherence to conversational writing style and the rules of grammar by correspondents and producers for network television news magazines on the three primary over-the-air networks. The researchers document differences between networks, but point out that writers for all shows in the sample could do a better job of writing short sentences, using common words, and following the rules of grammar. The researchers employed the Flesch readability scale and devised a second scale to measure additional elements of conversational writing.

R-TV

Synergy Bias:

Conglomerates and Promotion in the News

Dmitri Williams
University of Michigan
Department of Communication Studies
2020 Frieze Building
105 South State Street
Ann arbor, MI 48104
(734) 764-0420
fax (734) 764-3288
dcwillia@umich.edu

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the University of Michigan Department of Communication and Mike Traugott, Nick Valentino, Stephen Lacy and Margaret Young who read earlier drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank Travis Dixon, Katherine Root, Dorothy Halcomb and Wayland Minot for their valuable assistance.

ABSTRACT

Synergy Bias:

Conglomerates and Promotion in the News

Dmitri Williams
University of Michigan

The "church-state" division between the editorial and business departments of a news organization is threatened by corporations who promote cooperation between and among divisions ("synergy"). A content analysis tested the research questions that the influence of parent companies on news content might produce an increase in the quantity and quality of company-related materials mentioned on the news. The results showed that such biases did occur, but not evenly and more often in the vertically integrated corporations.

This paper examines whether large corporations with national news outlets might in some way influence the delivery of the news. Such influence could take one of two forms: removing stories that are thought to be detrimental to the corporation or the placement of stories that are thought to be helpful to the corporation. While critically oriented scholars have uncovered substantial anecdotal evidence of this first type of offense (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Lee & Solomon, 1990; Lafayette, 1998; Brill, in Columbia Journalism Review, 1997), systematic measurement and analysis remains elusive. What is possible to measure is the second type of offense, the unwarranted placement of items helpful to the corporation. Such placement might be seen as a result of three types of influence within a large conglomerate: influence across product lines, influence within media divisions, or influence from advertisers. This study focuses on the first two. At the root level, such phenomena can be seen essentially as product placement within the newscast. This paper explores this type of corporate behavior, assumed to be the result of an increasingly synergistic form of corporate structure. It evaluates whether or not conglomerate media and non-media holdings might predict both the kinds of stories a network will run, and the way in which it will run them. Research on one other medium, newspapers, has shown conflicting evidence of ownership's influence on content (Coulson & Hansen, 1995; Lacy, 1991; Lacy & Fico, 1990; Donohue, et al, 1985), and attention paid to the effects of private and public ownership models on content (Blankenberg, 1982; Blankenberg, 1983; Thrift, 1977). To date there has been no published systematic research examining the relationship between conglomeration and news content on television. To qualify, this study is exploratory and the results are not intended to generalize across time. It asks basic research questions to see if the phenomenon in question is actually present. It also proceeds with the assumption that the press should operate in a socially responsible manner.[1]

We begin with an inherent contradiction in both print and televised newsgathering: it seeks to be a non-business-oriented fair dispenser of the news, and yet like any other for-

[1] These assumptions draw from the Hutchins Commission's 1947 report and Petersen's notable chapter

profit industry it has payrolls, revenues, and often stock values (Schudson, 1978). Thus, the influences on the process of gathering and reporting news are theorized to come from a variety of sources. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) conceptualize these influences on content as coming from five levels: ideological, extramedial, organizational, media routines and individuals. This study is concerned with influences at the organizational level which, in their words, have a "pervasive, if not readily identifiable, effect on media content" (p. 125). They note that organization charts of the major media outlets show that those charged with editorial quality goals eventually report to someone charged with economic goals. Top-level executives typically make commercial decisions and bottom-level creative staff make editorial decisions, leaving the middle level of managers, editors and producers as a buffer. The issue is therefore often: Editors know the pressures of balancing the ledger against editorial content, but do they feel more accountable to stockholders than to their audience? In theory, freedom from any kind of business influence on reporting is possible because of the clear separation of business and editorial sides of a news operation (Silk, 1984). While "objectivity" remains an unattainable ideal, there is no doubt that it remains the goal (Schudson, 1978). Phillips (1977), in a 1974 survey of daily journalists, found that 98% of news gatherers and editors consider objectivity an absolutely core value of their trade. Studies of the popular press show that long-term trends indicate a rise in professional standards such as fairness and balance over the last century (Schudson, 1995).

How is it then that critics have become so alarmed about the current state of journalism? One key factor is the rise of conglomerate interests in the newsroom that put profits ahead of professional reporting (McManus, 1994). According to some, market-driven journalism "gathers an audience not to inform it, but to sell it to advertisers" (Bagdikian, 1990). Carter (1991) claims that pragmatism rules all in today's mass media. Halberstam states that for news operations, "the stock price becomes the only part of the report card that matters (1999, p. 96). This orientation may be the result of deregulation and lower antitrust

---

"The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press" (1973, in Siebert, et al)

enforcement in the 1980s and 1990s. The recent and ongoing wave of media mergers has resulted in the conglomeration of formerly independent news agencies into large firms. Increasingly, news organizations now find themselves as part of a large "multitentacled" corporation (Farhi, 1998, p. 20). The resulting concentration of news outlet ownership has raised serious issues from both critical and economic scholars. The former are concerned with the absence of diverse viewpoints in the media (Albarran, 1996; Christians, 1995), and bias in reporting the interests of capital over others' (Liebling, 1964). In contrast, Downing (1990) claims that this fear is a leftist, elitist exercise, and that the potential for alternative sources "has never been stronger" (p. 41). Economists have noted that the concentration of market power in the hands of a few will result in both inefficiencies (Adams & Brock, 1986; Lacy & Simon, 1993) and in more homogeneous content and higher prices (Litman, 1989). In the spirit of Schumpeter's "gales of creative destruction," the counterargument takes a Darwinist approach. For example, media analyst Andrew Tyndall notes that the rise of competitive 24-hour cable news and the rise of the Internet have created new competitive paradigms in which these corporations have lost their oligopoly power (1999, p. 94). Regardless of what one thinks of concentrations of power, what is clear is that the way of doing business in both print and televised journalism has changed.

State of Affairs

Journalists value the church-state division in newsgathering and its clean separation of business and editorial staffs (Silk, 1984).[2] This division is sometimes violated, creating anxiety in newsrooms, with the October 1999 scandal at the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* serving as a case in point (Barringer, 1999; Zacchino, 1999).[3]

---

[2] Auletta puts it bluntly: "We want to keep the business and the advertising department the hell out of the news room" (Tucher, 1997, p. 46).

[3] A working agreement for sharing advertising revenues between the *Times* and a local sports arena was challenged by the staff as an improper violation of, according to one columnist "the wall." The *Times Magazine* covered the arena's opening, and was also one of its primary corporate founders. In an unusual

Before the major networks became subdivisions of larger corporations, their news divisions operated relatively independently of the larger network corporate structure (Auletta, 1992). Pressure from the advertising level has persisted historically, but pressure from other parts of the organization itself appears to be a new phenomenon. The recent and massive corporate consolidations of media companies has changed the relative size and source of these organizational influences. The potential for influence increases with the size and the level of integration within the parent conglomerate. This suggests that a network without a large, well-integrated corporate parent would experience less influence, as we might expect to see at CBS prior to the October 1999 Viacom merger.

The simple economies created by the mega-mergers and acquisitions of the '80s and '90s are staggering. Editorial decisions can now affect the bottom line of parent corporations worth $12, $27, or even $100 billion annually (see Appendix for an abbreviated list of conglomerate holdings for this study). Instead of the traditional fear of alienating advertisers, an editor might now worry about alienating a powerful executive in another branch of the organization or hurting shareholder equity through inappropriate coverage or non-coverage of a story relating to the corporation's interests. Similarly, with simply more products and services under the corporate umbrella, it becomes more likely that the parent company may become news itself.

Synergy Bias

Bias in reporting means many different things. Critics have claimed that the media elite bring their own ideological bias to reporting (Lichter et al, 1986), while others contend that such effects are negligible due to the social and practical constraints of the journalists' work environment (Gans, 1980). In reporting, "hidden bias agents" are said to come from source selection, story selection, bias in the play [story order], and bias in the duration of the story

---

move to regain credibility after being outed by the New York Times, the newspaper published an extensive

(Cirino, 1971). What's been lost in all of the competing complaints about reporters' backgrounds and other forms of bias—environmental, political, racial, etc.—is a macro form of bias. Shoemaker and Reese's organizational-level approach provides for bias coming not from the leanings or background of a reporter or editor, but from the structure of the organization creating the news: "financial interests play a major role in determining what we see—and don't see—on television" (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 59). This is what "synergy bias" is intended to convey, although this study constrains itself to promotional and not exclusionary bias. Synergy is cooperation between and among divisions, creating opportunities by working together that would have been impossible working apart. This concept is a basic business-world value that many CEOs strive for, and it frequently improves the bottom line, even in news-based conglomerates (Auletta, 1998). Groups working together are thought to be more productive, more creative, more willing to take risks, and more innovative than individuals working alone (Schemerhorn et al, 1991). For managers, the connotation is clearly positive.

If groups of people working together can be more productive, creative, etc., why not whole companies or divisions? Why should one division of IBM or Disney not work with another? As corporations buy other corporations, the formerly independent companies are now divisions of a larger whole. Indeed, synergy is often the point of many conglomerate mergers where the strengths of one company complement the other. For example, one corporation may have the product and the other the distribution channels. America OnLine may want Netscape's technology and Netscape may want AOL's client base. Together, they achieve synergy and profits increase. If Disney buys ABC, would it not make sense for all of the various corporate holdings (e.g. ABC, ESPN, E!, Miramax Films, Buena Vista Distribution, etc.) to work together? Journalism, of course, is the main exception we expect the corporations to make. Proponents of synergy in journalism cite expanding bottom lines and opportunities for improved reporting (Schlosser, 1997). Simultaneously, critics have

---

investigation of itself produced independently of the regular editorial process (see Shaw, 1999).

bashed synergy, calling it "the dedication of an entire, far-flung multimedia empire to selling its products with every means at its disposal" (Rich, 1996, p. 19).

In this study, "synergy bias" has a specific meaning. It is the extent to which this business world value of synergy interferes with balanced reporting by adding promotional items within the newscast.[4] Because the potential for it must first exist, promotional synergy bias should be most likely in larger, more diversified and more integrated corporations, and not as evident in less diversified and integrated ones. In the case of the networks studied here (in early 1999), we expect relatively well-integrated media giants like Time Warner and Disney to exhibit it more than the less integrated GE and CBS. CBS, as both a less-integrated and smaller conglomerate should exhibit the least effects. It therefore represents the baseline for the study.

Claims of Synergy

The traditional complaint in print and televised news has been of getting editorial pressure from the advertising side of the operation. But with the news outlet as part of a diversified conglomerate, it is also possible for an editor or reporter to get pressure from wholly unrelated divisions, and that is the focus for this study. The conglomerate's best interests may directly conflict with the news division's role as protector of the public interest: "The clash between shareholder responsibility and the public trust will not subside" (Auletta, 1992, p. 569). For the editor, the stakes have been raised: The influence of an ad salesman might be real, yet small compared to the influence of powerful figures like Rupert Murdoch or Michael Eisner. Or, the unseen hand of the market could have influence. Investors and shareholders are, in general, forcing "media companies toward strictly market (profitability) objectives" (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 12).

[4] While synergy bias might also include the omission of news items thought harmful to the conglomerate, such omissions are difficult to measure systematically. This study is limited only to crimes of comission.

Problems in newsgathering may result from external business pressures. Self-censorship may be a stronger force than direct influence—the danger would not be so much in a corporate head exerting influence, but in reporters and editors anticipating reprisals on their careers for not being team players. Recent anecdotal evidence of the placement of news items provides highlights:[5]

- Anchor Tom Brokaw repeatedly promoted his book "The Greatest Generation" on NBC News shows. NBC owns nearly 25 percent of the book's profits (Rosenwein, 1999).
- ABC's (owned by Disney) *Good Morning America* spent two hours covering Disney World's 25th Anniversary, including an interview with CEO Michael Eisner. The program also brought on the "Pets.com sock puppet" as a guest shortly after Disney purchased a minor stake in Pets.com (Kaufman, 2000).
- The May 20, 1996 cover of *Time* featured a movie still from Time-Warner's "Twister" for a science story on tornadoes, coinciding with the movie's release.

Not everyone is alarmed. Synergy may be too difficult to actually carry out in large, complex organizations, and the resulting lack of credibility wouldn't be worth the effort (Pearlstine, 1999). Likewise, Meyer (1987) argues that the market contains adequate safeguards against abuse. Echoing this libertarian approach, Gordon contends that the

[5]The removal of damaging news items remains a problem as well. Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. has been accused of the most spectacular transgressions in editorial conflict of interest. If half of Russ Baker's (1998) "Murdoch's Mean Machine" article is accurate, Murdoch may well be the most easily identifiable editorial transgressor of the modern era.
In this particular case, his London paper *The Times* was accused of not covering the story of HarperCollins dropping former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten's book, which was critical of China. News Corp. owns HarperCollins. At the time, Murdoch was attempting to open the Chinese market, most notably for the Chinese release of *Titanic*. The retiring East Asia editor for *The Times*, Jonathan Mirsky is quoted as saying that the paper "has simply decided, because of Murdoch's interests, not to cover China in a serious way."

influence of business values within an organization is irrelevant because market forces will necessitate whatever product consumers want (Gordon, 1999).[6]

Still, the issue of product placement remains problematic, not because the audience can't discount it when it is apparent, but *precisely because this placement is unlabeled as such within the newscast.*

In response to these general charges, ADWEEK has responded, "absent from these rants was solid evidence of any post-merger horror caused specifically by the dreaded 'synergy' effect" (ADWEEK, 1996). ADWEEK has a point. This study explores the issue, seeking to quantify and analyze promotional synergy bias in the context of media and non-media holdings promoted within newscasts, and to better inform the debate that continues. The content analysis here tests for the amount of self-promotion present. As noted, it is beyond the scope of this paper to also establish what news *isn't* reported out of corporate interest, although anecdotal evidence will be presented.

The studies' research questions are:

R_1: Will the holdings of the conglomerates correlate with the topics covered in their news content?

R_2: Will the holdings of the conglomerates correlate with the story order in which corporate products and services are mentioned in their news content?

R_3: Will the conglomerates cover their own products and services more often than each others' within their news content?

R_4: Will the conglomerates cover their own products and services more positively than each others' within their news content?

R_5: For R_1—R_4, will the less diversified and integrated media companies show less promotional synergy bias than the more diversified and integrated ones?

---

[6] A 1998 *American Journalism Review* poll found that nightly network news had a "net trust" rating of only 43 percent (compared to much higher trust levels for newspapers and local news (Newport & Saad).

Web Sites and News Division Products

Two types of news content, references to web sites and to news division products other than the nightly news (newsmagazine shows, morning shows, Sunday news talk shows, etc.), offer a decidedly blurry picture of what is and isn't pure self-promotion. Is the mention of a web site within a broadcast evidence of synergy bias? For example, CNN's web site offers both informative news content and direct links to its own web-based retail organization. MSNBC's has paid banner advertising. Similarly, is the blatant plug of another news division product a commercial or a news-based activity? When Tom Brokaw says "See you later tonight on *Dateline*," or "Watch the *Today Show* tomorrow morning for more," it is unclear whether that is an extension of the news reporting process or a push for ratings. This study captures these elements along with the rest and reports them separately.

Method

Sample

The drawing of the sample required first the selection of a medium, and then the selection of newscasts to be analyzed. Television was chosen because of its well-studied powers of influence and because of its importance as a source of news information. A second important factor in studying promotional synergy bias is that it has to be possible—only newscasts operated by an integrated conglomerate can possibly have it. This immediately restricts the population to newscasts produced by corporations that operate national news programming and have other substantial non-news-related interests: Disney,

News Corp., Time-Warner, CBS and General Electric.[7] Each company operates a regular news outlet, with Disney, CBS and G.E. operating the most prominent nightly network shows, *ABC World News Tonight*, the *CBS Evening News*, and *NBC Nightly News*. Time-Warner's *CNN Headline News* represents the program closest in format.[8] News Corp.'s news programming is the least watched of the five, and was excluded from the study. The sample included a one-week pretest and four full weeks each for the four nightly news programs.

CBS had the fewest non-news holdings and therefore represents the closest thing to an independently owned outlet. It is the study's baseline. Since CBS is the least diversified and least vertically integrated of the companies at the time of the sample, we would also expect CBS to show the least amount of synergy bias relative to the other three. According to R_5, CBS should not cover its own topics more than others', should put mentions of its own products at the same point in the broadcast as it does others', mention its own products at closer to the real-world baseline level than the others do, and cover its products qualitatively the same as it covers others'. For the remaining three, effects should mirror the various conglomerates' integration and diversification. G.E. should show the least effects because, although it is a large conglomerate, its media holdings are not as well integrated through production, distribution and exhibition as Disney and Time Warner's. These latter two should therefore exhibit the strongest effects.

There were four full weeks in the sample. Weeks were selected purposely on the basis of when synergy bias was thought to be most observable, based on the industry interests of the four corporations and their business cycles.[9] A study of Disney, Time-Warner, CBS and G.E.'s corporate structures revealed a wide range of interests in fields from nuclear

---

[7]Note that this study's sample was drawn before the CBS-Viacom merger and after CBS' divestiture of Westinghouse.

[8]For comparability, *Headline News* was recorded at the same broadcast times as the other programs. Pre-test and final data analysis showed that these four programs had comparable story totals and durations, and are standardized for direct comparison where appropriate.

power to publishing. However, each of the four, except CBS, has strong retail interests in at least one field. Therefore, a strong retail season would make an ideal part of the sample, so the pre-Christmas shopping season was selected. Since this season is also above average for movie receipts, we should expect to see more synergy bias from those conglomerates with motion picture interests (Disney and, to a lesser extent, Time-Warner). The first half of the sample was comprised of the two weeks from Saturday, December 12 to Friday, December 25, 1998. The second field in which all have considerable interests is broadcasting; all four conglomerates produce and air television programming. The second half of the sample was the February sweeps period, which was the two weeks from Monday, January 25 to Sunday, February 7, 1999.[10] The sample includes an equal number of weekdays.

Coding Scheme and Definitions

The broadcast was defined as the time between the start of the broadcast's music until the beginning of the credit sequence. The unit of analysis was the individual story. The coding definition of a story was the part of the broadcast during which a particular topic was covered. In the case of a longer, more complex story, individual segments reported by separate journalists were assigned as stories. Pre-commercial teases and "top story" recaps were left out on the assumption that they offered no new information to the viewer. The study's final *n* was 1,405 stories

---

[9]An over-time sample would be ideal, but these weeks were chosen because they represent a test of the critical case for this exploratory study: If we can't detect synergy bias here, it is not likely to occur in a representative sample either. Results, therefore cannot be generalized across time.

[10]The study's sample did contain a notable historic event, the presidential impeachment trial, raising a validity issue. The question is, did that story occupy more time than typical lead stories do? Analysis of newscasts drawn after the sample show that in the first half of 1999 other strong lead stories exhibited the same coverage pattern, dominating the first four to six minutes of coverage (the Kosovo Crisis, the Littleton massacre and even tornadoes often took this much and occasionally more time). Impeachment then, was likely not a more dominant news story than other events, but did persist. If it precluded other news stories over time, it would actually leave less broadcast time for synergy bias. Therefore the measure of effects found would need to be considered inherently conservative.

In order to say that a corporation's other divisions have influenced news content, the analysis must first identify their interests—Corporation X mentioned their products more or less often than others did and more positively or negatively than others did. Therefore, each story was coded for topic, its order in the broadcast ("play" or "position"), whether or not it contained a mention of any product or service owned by any of the four corporations and for valence on three dimensions (see below). To address R_1, each story was assigned a topic code. Topic categories were selected based solely on corporate holdings, and all other stories (politics, weather, etc) were coded as misc. Topic codes were mutually exclusive and allowed later analysis to determine whether the specific industries covered matched the holdings of the broadcasting conglomerate. Addressing R_5, we would expect the most integrated companies to match their topic selection to their holdings and the least, CBS, to show no apparent match. To answer R_2, each story was also assigned a simple play order for position within broadcast. As before, we would expect the most integrated companies to place their own products and services higher in the broadcast and the least later. For R_3, stories were coded for the presence of their own and others' corporate products and interests, referred to as "mentions." The coding scheme allowed for any number of mentions within a story unit (the most observed in any one story was six). Capturing these mentions required a code for both affiliation and a comprehensive list and methodology for assigning them. Such a list was created, and the final dataset included the authentication of every possible mention found by any coder.[11]

Story valence allows a contextual test of R_4 in that we can see if corporate products are mentioned within stories with a more positive valence. Valence was recorded on three dimensions within a story unit. In each case, valence was coded as a five-level interval variable with the following values: –2 for very negative, -1 for somewhat negative, 0 for neutral, 1 for somewhat positive, and 2 for very positive. Story valence was coded as the

[11]An exhaustive list of the corporations' other divisions and products was created from myriad sources, notably including their SEC 10-K filings and annual reports for 1998, the Columbia Journalism Review's

answer to the theoretical question: "How do you think most people would react to this story?" For example, a story about a small rise in the GNP would be somewhat positive, while the story of a triumphant balloon voyage might around the world would be very positive. Either story might also have mentioned a corporation's product. To directly test R_4, each such mention within a story/unit was coded for valence as well. As a second test of R_4, each mention was given a valence code for corporate interest, coded as the answer to the question "If you were the CEO of the parent company whose product was mentioned, how would you think the mention was for business?" For example, a segment on families enjoying themselves at Disneyland would be coded as "very positive," and a corporation's stock value plummeting would be coded as "very negative," regardless of the network broadcasting the story. Corporate web sites and mentions of the companies' news division products were coded and reported separately.

Coding Reliability

Two coders were used in the content analysis, with one coding the entire sample of 100 broadcasts and the second double-coding a sub-sample of 50 broadcasts, randomly assigned but with equal weights given to the four networks.

Scott's pi ((observed agreement – expected)/(1 – expected)) was calculated for the study's five categorical variables: story topic and mention, affiliation of mention, web site, and news division codes. Pi reports a more conservative statistic for reliability than simple percentage agreement because it corrects for the likelihood of agreement by chance, based on the number of possible categories (Scott, 1955). For story topic, base percentage agreement was 94.18%, adjusted to a pi of .939. For mention, this same statistic was calculated with one complication. Since the possible number of categories of mention was, for practical purposes, infinite (consider the record catalogs of Time Warner, the retail

---

online database of media ownership, news clippings and interviews with corporate officials. In each case

products of G.E., etc.), I took the conservative approach of limiting the number of possible categories to the number of unique observations actually captured in the study. Pi was then .76.[12] Pi's for mention affiliation, web site and news division were .96, .8 and .8, respectively. Cronbach's alpha was reported for the study's three interval-level variables: story, mention and corporate interest valence. Alphas were acceptable, calculated as .90, .84, and .95, respectively.

Results

R_1: Will the holdings of the conglomerates correlate with the topics covered in their news content?

TABLE A ABOUT HERE

Corporate interests did coincide with what story topics were run, but not for all industries, and as predicted, not for CBS. What effects there were were minimal, and empty cell bias precludes strong conclusions for R_1. Table A shows how much attention each broadcasting network gives to particular story topics.[13] Promotional synergy bias predictions can be tested based on knowledge of corporate holdings. By finding an industry in which one or two of the conglomerates have more substantial interests than the others, a comparison can be made. For example, only CBS had interests in outdoor advertising. More stories by CBS on outdoor advertising would be evidence of synergy bias (In fact, this is not what was observed). Since this type of analysis assumes that more in-house

---

that a mention was unknown or suspected, it was researched until definitive ownership was established.

[12]For calculating observed agreement, I unitized, calculating (agreement on mentions within the units)/(unique mentions coded by either coder within the unit).

[13]Once the table has been converted to percentages, the row results lose their statistical significance, with only Professional sports showing yielding a Chi-square test where $p<.05$. As raw numbers, the chart and about half of the industry rows meet the test at $p<.05$. However, as a non-probability sample, the results are not intended to be generalizable to a different timeframe.

industry coverage is likely to be positive, I will point out the exceptions in the actual stories where that approach is less useful.

Professional Sports. All four conglomerates have interests in the broadcast of sporting events during the sample period, most notably in football broadcast rights on CBS and ABC and its sister network, ESPN. Time Warner, however, has the most sports coverage while its main seasonal interests of hockey, basketball and Braves baseball were not prominent parts of the sports news frame. There were two notable patterns in the sports coverage. The first was CBS' coverage of football, for which it retains the rights to the less profitable half (AFC) of the pro games. CBS' coverage of the sport was notably critical, focusing on poor officiating and the dark side of sports-related gambling. Secondly, the Olympic Games bribery scandal broke during the sample period, providing an opportunity to see how the broadcaster of the Games, G.E. would cover the event compared to other networks. G.E. ran 2 critical stories on the Olympics crisis, compared to three by CBS, one by ABC and four by CNN, offering no solid evidence of bias.

Movies. Of the four, only Disney and Time Warner have any interests in the movie industry, and the sample was selected in part on the prediction that these two would offer the most coverage. Only those two ran *any* stories on movies. However, Time Warner's stories did not focus on the parent companies' movies more than others', merely promoting the industry as a whole.

Web sites. While all four have growing web-based assets, none could be said to have outright dominant interest in this industry, with the exception of G.E. G.E.'s partnership with the powerful Microsoft corporation and their involvement in both WebTV and the MSNBC network and site make it a strong player on the Web. G.E. had the most coverage of the four, with more than double the next highest, Time Warner.

Long Distance Phone Service. Only G.E. has any interest here and ran no stories on the topic.

Broadcast Channels, Programming. All four have significant interests in broadcasting, owning multiple cable networks and production houses. The three major networks of ABC, CBS and NBC had more coverage than Time Warner, with G.E.'s NBC leading the way. Although no strong inference can be reasonably drawn here, it is worth noting that NBC has frequently been the ratings leader over recent years.

Cable Providers. Time Warner is the undisputed giant of this industry, but had the least amount of coverage on it. In contrast, Disney's ABC News ran stories on the advances in cable technology and saturation that could be argued to bolster Time Warner's substantial cable portfolio.

Book Publishing. Time Warner and Disney have the strongest assets here, but the one story found (a CNN piece on e-books) could not be said to be evidence of anything in particular.

Home Appliances & Home Electronics. These are G.E.'s home categories, but NBC did not mention any appliance and electronics products in the sample.

Commercial Music. This category was dominated by Time Warner, with minor holdings by Disney. Although Time Warner did run the most stories on commercial music by a very slight margin, the majority of these stories and mentions were of non-Time Warner artists. This mirrors the observation for movies.

Themes Parks. Disney has significant theme park holdings, while Time Warner has fewer, and the rest none. There was no Disney coverage of theme parks in what might be a noteworthy non-mention.[14] Time Warner (Disney's theme park competitor) ran the story of an accident at Disneyland and Disney did not. However, neither did CBS or G.E., making for an inconclusive episode.

Financial Services & Information Services. G.E. and Disney have interests here, but ran no stories.

---

[14]Disney did objectively cover the Baptist boycott of Disney products and parks, but that story was not coded as centrally about theme parks per se.

Outdoor Advertising. CBS has the only interests in outdoor advertising, but ran no stories on the topic.

Retail Sales. All but CBS have significant stakes in retail, with G.E. easily highest in annual revenues, followed by Time Warner and Disney. G.E. had the second-most coverage, followed by Time Warner, CBS and Disney. This would suggest that retail coverage bears a rough similarity to industry position, but it was by no means conclusive.

Magazines and Newspapers. Disney has the most interest, but no parallel connections in coverage can be seen here, with none of the networks giving much coverage at all to the topic.

Aircraft Equipment, Defense Weaponry. This category has been most often associated with G.E. due to its former well-publicized defense-oriented holdings. However, G.E. has divested itself of most of its major weapons-making concerns, keeping only its aircraft engine manufacturing operation. G.E. did not offer coverage of the topic significantly different from the other networks. A counter claim might be that G.E. would seek to suppress coverage of weaponry to avoid negative publicity or to avoid scrutiny.[15] However, G.E. had neither the most nor least coverage of aircraft.

Power: Gas, Crude, Hydro, Electric. Again, these were G.E. holdings and the coverage was elsewhere. However, most coverage of power was decidedly negative, focusing on the high costs of replacing gas tanks and the environmental costs of power. Therefore, it may be notable that G.E. had the least coverage.

In sum, R_j can be answered weakly with a "yes," but only for certain industries and not for all networks. As predicted, CBS did not promote its own industries to the extent that the other three did. There was minor evidence of synergy bias by Disney for movies and theme parks and weak evidence for broadcast programming. G.E. showed possible bias in its slightly smaller selection of negative stories on power, with marginal evidence of bias in

[15]Because the sample captured segments of the Kosovo crisis, weaponry—including several warplanes with G.E. engines—was not an unusual topic on all four networks. In all cases and on all networks during the sample, coverage of U.S. defense hardware was technical and generally neutral in its description.

sports, web sites, broadcast programming and retail sales. Notably, G.E. showed no story selection bias in weaponry. Time Warner gave some evidence of synergy bias in its general coverage pattern for movies, music and retail, but did not appear to promote its own products any more than others' in the field.

R_2: Will the holdings of the conglomerates correlate with the story order in which corporate products and services are mentioned in their news content?

If it could be assumed that stories given higher play are considered more newsworthy by the viewer, then we would expect broadcasts with synergy bias to mention their own products sooner than others'. This was not the case, and the answer to R_2 is "No."

TABLE B ABOUT HERE

Table B shows the mean play order for each network for mentions by all networks. For example, Disney mentioned G.E.'s products on average in about the fourth story in its broadcasts and its own products (bolded) at about the eight story. Surprisingly, none of the four conglomerates mentioned their own products before all of the others' in the newscasts.[16] In fact, they consistently mentioned their own products *after* their competitors.

We now move to the frequency and valence of specific mentions within the broadcasts. As noted in the Methods section, mentions were coded for affiliation, valence of the mentioned item and valence of corporate interest. Mentions for corporate-owned web sites and references to other news division programs were coded separately, and show a wide

[16]Since the four networks have slightly differing formats, the mean number of stories per broadcast also differs. CBS ran 13.58 stories per show, Disney 13.67, G.E. 12.89 and Time Warner 16.24. In order to make the results directly comparable, this table shows results standardized to a mean of 10 stories per broadcast.

range of patterns. Time Warner was the heaviest self-promoter of web services and G.E. was the heaviest promoter of its news division products.[17]

R_3: Will the conglomerates cover their own products and services more often than each others' within their news content?

TABLE C ABOUT HERE

Table C offers a direct test of R_3, showing the percentage of the mentions on a given network that are in-house (with all web and news references removed). Of the 21 mentions of network products observed during CBS' coverage, 7 were CBS', yielding a baseline of 33% of home-conglomerate mentions. The differences from this baseline represent a measure of synergy bias: more than 33.3% of mentions should be considered pure product placement. Importantly, the baseline is not critical for establishing the presence of the phenomenon across all networks: Promotional synergy bias can be observed in the aggregate by comparing the marginal totals; if all four had report their share objectively, the percentages of mention coverage would sum to 100%. Instead, they sum to 179.4%, meaning that regardless of what baseline is used, the bias is present in the aggregate. We can say that synergy bias is present, even if we cannot say with certainty in which networks it is most prevalent.

R_4: Will the conglomerates cover their own products and services more positively than each others' within their news content?

[17]Web site references for the four networks were: CBS, 0.80/broadcast; Disney, 0.71; G.E. 0.43; Time Warner, 2.62. News division mentions were: CBS, 1.08/broadcast; Disney, 1.24; G.E. 2.07, Time Warner, 0.23.

R_4 asked whether these mentions would also be valenced in the home conglomerate's favor. An inconclusive result would be no significant difference between the valence of the baseline and broadcasting networks' reporting on their own products and services

TABLE D ABOUT HERE

The CBS baseline suggests that for a relatively independent news outlet, reporting on home-conglomerate products and services will be more critical than reporting on others'.[18] Results for G.E. were small and not significant at an acceptable level. The remaining two conglomerates' differences were statistically significant based on independent samples t-tests, and show that the broadcasters were all kinder to their own products and services, with Disney showing the largest credibility gap. The gap for Disney was the largest observed.

TABLE E HERE

A second, related test of R_4 was the valence of corporate interest in the mentions. A null result would be no significant difference in the valence of in-house versus others' mentions. Again, the CBS baseline yields a balanced result: there is no statistically significant difference between the valence of reporting on home vs. others' products. G.E. showed no significant difference either. However, both Disney and Time Warner[19] are observed as operating in their own corporate interest relative to the baseline, with Disney again exhibiting the largest gap among the networks.

[18] CBS' toughness on itself can be attributed to investigative stories on corporate holdings (one criticized an affiliate for age bias in its hiring of female newscasters).

[19] A small portion of Time Warner's gap can be attributed to the sustained efforts made during its sports broadcast segment to hyping its online fantasy sports business. This was observed 10 times during the sample. This could have been coded as a web site item, but the coordinated sales pitch for *Sports Illustrated* subscriptions during the signup process made it commercial. Removing these 10 mentions did not seriously change the mean valence or p-value.

R_6: For R_1—R_4, will the less diversified and integrated media companies will show less promotional synergy bias than the more diversified and integrated ones?

With the exception of the frequency of in-house mentions, CBS consistently operated with the least self-interest and operated as a good baseline. It did not run stories weighted to its corporate holdings, did not cover its own products and services more preferentially than others' and did not mention its own products in a manner consistent with the corporate interest. GE also showed limited effects in the predicted directions. Time Warner showed consistent effects, but they were not as large as Disney—the most well-integrated of the four.

Discussion

Taken together, the results provide some evidence of synergy bias in the predicted directions. Causal inferences cannot yet be drawn because time order has not been established and plausible alternative hypotheses have not been ruled out. Still, the results supported the following predictions. Outlets will include more references to conglomerate-owned products and services and treat those items more favorably than they will others'. The relative "independence" of the outlet moderates the effect. The network owned by the least integrated and diversified company, CBS, showed the least evidence of synergy bias. These are the overarching findings of this study, but they belie the complexity of the results. None of the four corporations showed a systematic tendency to push their own products over others' in all fields. Instead, their pushes were more often constrained to certain industries, typically the more visible ones.

The potential for promotional synergy bias was affected by both particular historical events and concentration of the more visible corporate holdings. Disney tended to mention its own movies, but then again, its movies were also among the box office leaders during the sample. An exception makes an interesting test case. Disney mentioned Miramax's

(Disney's) "Shall We Dance" in a story on the rise of ballroom dancing in Japan. Was the movie mentioned to give color to a story that was going to be reported anyway, or was the story reported to promote the movie? We cannot know of course, but it is telling that overall Disney mentioned more of its own movies than others'.

Another noteworthy pattern in coverage was stock price reporting. Time Warner consistently reported the fluctuations in the stocks of all four companies regardless of whether they were up or down.[20] NBC tended to selectively report the stock movements of a select few companies described as "widely held stocks" that happened to include G.E. and corporate partner Microsoft. While it is true that those two stocks are among the most widely held, it was notable that they were only reported on NBC as rising during the sample and not when they dropped.

Observations of topic coverage and play order offered less support for the hypotheses. Echoing Pearlstine, it may simply be that the supervision of topic selection from the corporate level is not worth the resources for the potential synergy gains. Likewise, play order did not conform to predictions. Why would the networks systematically mention their own products after their competitors' rather than before? In effect, they buried their own references in the newscast. It could be that the editors are more aware of who owns what than anyone else, and wish to avoid the appearance of impropriety in this most obvious fashion. Or it could simply be that their products and services tend to be more closely related to topics that run nearer to the end of broadcasts.

Web and news division mentions were coded separately, but because of their ambiguous role, they deserve some discussion. Were these references also commercialized tools for the networks? The evidence suggests that they were. Time Warner gave the most substantial push to its web sites and G.E. gave the most substantial push to its news programming. Of the four, only Time Warner had a retail opportunity on its web site. Of the four, only G.E. had a markedly significant stake in its news division shows. Both the *Today* show and

Dateline have been ratings champions before, during and after the sampling period. Frequency of mention would therefore appear to follow profitability patterns. The notable exception was Time Warner's news promotions—it was surprising that the one all-news network did not promote its news programming to the same extent as NBC.

It is worth noting the few obvious occasions when a story wasn't covered. For example, an event relating to Microsoft, a highly visible corporate partner to G.E. (Microsoft being the "MS" in G.E.'s MSNBC) during the sample bears some investigation. The Microsoft antitrust suit was in a particularly contentious phase during the sample period, including an incident during which Microsoft was embarrassed to admit that it had tampered with evidence. While ABC and Time Warner covered the event in terms unflattering to Microsoft, G.E. did not give it any play. Again, we cannot know exactly why that was, and the fact that CBS didn't cover it precludes the instant conclusion that the story wasn't run for reasons of self-interest. This finding is similar to Disney's failure to cover an accident at Disneyland. There was also the case of a merger involving Time Warner and AT&T. Time Warner covered the press conference in a neutral, if uncritical fashion and the CNN reporter made pains to disclose that Time Warner was the parent company of his network. Neither G.E. nor Disney reported on the story, but CBS did and offered a more critical and balanced story than CNN.

This study cannot draw a causal connection between corporate intentions and resulting changes in news programming, nor can it say how those changes take place. What it can say is that integrated conglomerates are successfully utilizing product placement strategies without identifying them as such within newscasts. The tradition of labeling promotion and editorial content clearly goes back to the era of the penny press (Schudson, 1978), but no doubt there have always been violations of the ideal. These results support the contention that those violations are present today. Disturbingly, we do not know if viewers are aware of

[2]This sub-study of stock reporting was the only way in which coders were instructed to use *Headline News'*

this phenomenon or what its effects might be. Further research should examine the extent of both factors.

There are further ways to make a stronger case for the presence of the phenomenon. Future studies could extend the generalizability of the results over time by drawing a random sample of programming. Secondly, another methodology would be needed to show evidence of the process at work: what are the internal mechanisms by which these product placements take operate? Participant observer methodology such as that of Gans' *Deciding What's News* (Gans, 1980) might offer insight into the mechanisms behind story selection and self-censorship in modern news bureaus. The inferences for individual networks would also be stronger if they could be compared with a baseline of content from a major network that produced a truly independent news outlet. The closest thing is PBS' *News Hour*. However, its stylistic "talk" format makes for too rough a comparison. Unfortunately, there are no other nationally televised alternatives that are independently owned and operated.

Lastly, the CBS-Viacom merger has removed the presence of a baseline for comparison.[21] Future content analyses could employ a similar methodology to this one and thereby capture any changes in CBS' broadcasts at some future date. If observed, such changes could be argued to be the result of integration and conglomeration, lending further weight to findings presented here.

---

stock ticker/sports updater banner that runs across the bottom of the screen.

[21]CBS' Viacom merger after the sample presents the opportunity for an interesting natural experiment. As noted, CBS was the least diversified and smallest of the four conglomerates, and was shown to have the least synergy bias present. After the merger it became a substantially larger, more diversified and more vertically integrated conglomerate, and I would expect synergy bias to increase. Early comments from Viacom's chief, Sumner Redstone, indicate that the new company may already be more sensitive to external pressures on its news gathering (Associated Press, Sep. 28, 1999).

References

Adams, A. & Brock, J. (1986). The Bigness Complex. New York: Pantheon.

ADWEEK (1996, November 26). Commentary.

Albarran, A. (1996). Media economics: understanding markets, industries and concepts. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

Associated Press (1999, September 28). Journalism shouldn't slight foreign governments, Viacom chief says.

Auletta, K. (1998, June). Synergy City, American Journalism Review, p. 18.

Auletta, K. (1992). Three Blind Mice. New York: Vintage, p. 569.

Bagdikian, B. (1990). The Media Monopoly. Boston: Beacon. In McManus, J. (1994). Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Baker, R. (1998, May/June). Murdoch's Mean Machine. Columbia Journalism Review, p. 51.

Barringer, F. (1999, October 26) Newspaper Magazine Shares Profits With a Subject, The New York Times, p. C1.

Blankenberg (1982). Newspaper Ownership and Control of Circulation to Increase Profits. Journalism Quarterly. Autumn, p. 390-398.

— (1983). A Newspaper Chain's Pricing Behavior. Journalism Quarterly. Summer, p. 275-280.

Carter III, H. (1991). Forward. In Christians, C. Media Ethics. White Plains: Longman Publishing.

Christians, C. (1995). Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning, Fourth Edition. White Plains: Longman.

Cirino, R. (1971). Don't Blame the People. Los Angeles: Diversity Press.

Coulsen, D. & Hansen, A. (1995, Vol. 72, No. 1). The *Louisville Courier-Journal's* News Content after Purchase by Gannett, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly.

Playing Telephone at Time Warner (1997, September/October). In Columbia Journalism Review.

Donohue, G., Olien, C. & Tichenor, P. (1985, 62: Autumn). Reporting Conflict by Pluralism, Newspaper Type and ownership, Journalism Quarterly.

Downing, J. (1990, v42, N1). The political economy of U.S. television, Monthly Review, p. 30-41.

Farhi, P. (1998, September 28). Disney Takes the Ball and Runs. The Washington Post National Weekly Edition, p. 20.

Gans, H. (1980). Deciding What's News. New York: Vintage.

Gordon, A. D. & Kittross, J. M. (1999). Controversies in media ethics (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Halberstam, D. Quoted in Rosenwein, R. (1999/2000 December/January). Why Media Mergers Matter. Brill's Content, p. 96.

Herman, E. S. & Chomsky, N. (1988). Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. New York: Pantheon Books.

Kaufman, L. (2000, March 27). The Sock Puppet That Roared: Internet Synergy or a Conflict of Interest? The New York Times, p. C1.

Lacy, S. (1991, Spring). Effects of Group Ownership on Daily Newspaper Content, Journal of Media Economics.

Lacy, S. & Fico, F. (1990, Spring). Newspaper Ownership and Quality: Rating the Groups, Newspaper Research Journal.

Lacy, S. & Simon, T. (1993). The Economics and Regulation of United States Newspapers. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.

Lafayette, J. (1998, October 19). Critical ABC News Story on Disney Dies. Electronic Media, p. 1A.

Lee, M. & Solomon, N. (1990). Unreliable Sources. New York: Carol. P. 59

Lichter, S. R., Rothman, S. & Lichter, L.S. (1986). The Media Elite. Bethesda: Adler & Adler.
Liebling, A. (1964). The Press. New York: Pantheon.
Litman, B. (1989). Hearings on Media Concentration. Written Testimony Before U.S. Senate Commerce Subcommittee.
McManus, J. (1994). Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Meyer, P. (1987). Ethical Journalism. New York: Longman. In McManus, J. (1994). Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Newport, F. & Saad, L. (1998, July/August). A Matter of Trust, American Journalism Review, p. 30-31.
Pearlstine, N. Quoted in Rosenwein, R. (1999/2000 December/January). Why Media Mergers Matter. Brill's Content, p. 94).
Phillips, E. B. (1977). Approaches to Objectivity: Journalistic vs. Social Science Perspectives. In Hirsch, P.M., Miller, P.V., & Kline, F.G. (Eds.), Strategies for Communication Research, (p. 63-77). Beverly Hills: Sage.
Rich, F. (1996, May 18). Media Amok. The New York Times, p. 19.
Rosenwein, R. (1999/2000 December/January). Why Media Mergers Matter. Brill's Content.
Shaw, D. (1999, Dec. 20). Crossing the Line. The Los Angeles Times, p. V1-14.
Schemerhorn, J., Hunt, J. & Osborn, R. (1991). Managing Organizational Behavior (Fourth Edition). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Schlosser, J. (1997, February 24). Time for CNN synergies. Broadcasting & Cable, p.53.
Schudson, M. (1978) Discovering the News. New York: Basic Books.
— (1995). The Power of News. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Schumpeter, J. (1950). Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 3rd Ed.. New York: Harper and Brothers.
Scott, W. (1955). Reliability of content analysis: The case of national scale coding. Public Opinion Quarterly, 17, p. 321-325.
Shoemaker, P. & Reese, S. (1991). Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content. New York: Longman.
Siebert, F., et al (1973). Four Theories of the Press. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Silk, L. (1984). The Ethics and Economics of Journalism. In The Responsibilities of Journalism. Schmuhl, R. (Ed.). Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
Smith, T. (1993, June 21) The Media Elite Revisited. National Review, p. 34.
Thrift, R. (1977). How Chain Ownership Affects Editorial Vigor of Newspapers. Journalism Quarterly, Summer, p. 411-420.
Tucher, A. (1997, March 13). The real dangers of conglomerate control: a Columbia Journalism Review forum looks at the bad news about corporate synergy. Columbia Journalism Review.
Tyndall, A. Quoted in Rosenwein, R. (1999/2000 December/January). Why Media Mergers Matter. Brill's Content, p. 94).
Zaccino, N. (1999, November 7). Commentary; Readers' Representative; Staples Incident Rocks Times, Inside and Out; Sharing Revenue on a Special Edition of the Newspaper's magazine Calls Everything We Do Into Question, The Los Angeles Times, p. M5, Op Ed.

Appendix: Overview of Corporate Holdings

Corp.	Category	Scope, Notable Properties
CBS (formerly Westinghouse)	• Radio	76 AM, 17 FM stations
	• TV O & O Stations	14 stations
	• Outdoor Advertising	
	• Network & Cable	Entertainment, News & CBS Network, TNN, TeleNoticias, Sports, Syndication, NFL rights, 6 cable networks
	• Internet/Multimedia	Two web sites: CBS.com, Country.com
G.E.	• TV O & O Stations	13 stations
	• Network & Cable	26 cable networks: NBC Network, CNBC, A &E, & joint: History Ch., MSNBC
	• Communications	Satellite, telephony, G.E. Long Distance
	• Industrial Services	Lighting, Plastics, G.E. Brand Products Appliances, Aircraft Engines, Medical & Power Systems
	• Internet/Multimedia	Enhanced Broadcasting, WebTV, NBC.com, CNET Interactive
	• Financial/ Capital Services	16 subsidiaries in finance, insurance, and equipment mgmt.
Time Warner	• Network & Cable	29 cable networks: CNN, WB, TBS, TNT, Primestar, Cartoon Network, HBO
	• Film Production/Distrib.	18 subsidiaries: Castle Rock, New Line
	• Music	Substantial: 53 labels. Atlantic, Elektra, Reprise
	• Magazines	Substantial: 19 titles. *Time*, *People*, *Money*
	• Sports	Pro teams, events, WCW Wrestling, Goodwill Games
	• Retail	Products, Stores, Warner Bros. Studio Stores
	• Theme Parks	
	• Internet/Multimedia	Medium: CNN Interactive, Fantasy Sports
	• Books	Substantial: 24 houses. Time-Life, Sunset
Disney	• Theme Parks/Resorts	International: Disneyland, Epcot, Disney Cruises
	• Radio	28 stations
	• TV O & O Stations	10 stations
	• Network & Cable	Substantial: Cap Cities/ABC, Disney Channel, ESPN, Lifetime, E!, A&E, Lifetime
	• Film Production/Distribution	Substantial: 7 studios. Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone, Miramax, Dimension, Buena Vista
	• Stage	Production group, *Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*
	• Sports	2 Pro franchises (& ESPN): Mighty Ducks, Anaheim Angels
	• Music	4 labels. Disney Records, Mammoth

• Internet/Multimedia	Substantial: ABC.com, ESPN.sportszone, NBA.com, Infoseek, Disney Interactive. "Go" Network
• Financial	Substantial: State Farm (partial interest)
• Retail	Substantial: Disney Store, merchandise
• Publishing	3 houses
• Magazines	6 subsidiaries *Biography, Jane, W*
• Newspapers	6 small papers

Table A: Network Coverage by Topic (%)

Topic	CBS (CBS) %	Disney (ABC) %	G.E. (NBC) %	T.W. (CNN) %	Mean
* **Pro Sports, athletes, events	4.8%	3.1	2.0	9.4	3.6
*Movies	0.0	0.7	0.0	2.7	0.9
*Web Sites	0.6	1.4	4.2	1.7	2.0
*Long Distance Phone Service	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
*Broadcast Channels, Programming	5.3	4.2	5.6	1.7	4.2
Cable Providers	0.3	1.0	0.0	0.2	0.4
Book Publishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.1
*Home Appliances & Electronics	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.2
Commercial Music	0.6	0.7	0.0	1.0	0.6
Theme Parks	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1
Financial Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1
Information Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1
Outdoor Advertising	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1
Retail Sales	1.4	1.0	1.7	2.2	1.6
Magazines & Newspapers	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3
Aircraft Equipment, Defense Weaponry	0.3	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.7
Power: Gas, Crude, Hydro, Nuclear	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.5
Other: Politics, Economy, Weather, Misc.	86.3	83.6	85.1	77.8	83.2
	100.0% n=357	100.0% n=287	100.0% n=355	100.0% n=406	

Test of Table $\chi 2$, 51 d.f = 118.06, $p<.001$

*Test of row $\chi 2$, 3 d.f. = $p<.05$ when using raw numbers

**Test of row $\chi 2$, 3 d.f. = $p<.05$ when using converted percentages

Table B: Mentions by Mean Position in Broadcast

	CBS (CBS)	Disney (ABC)	GE (NBC)	TW (CNN)
CBS mentions	**8.19**	na	na	7.70
Disney mentions	8.84	**8.19**	5.43	8.72
G.E. mentions	5.29	4.39	**5.22**	5.98
Time Warner mentions	5.16	6.80	4.50	**9.42**
Mean	6.87	6.46	5.05	7.95

Table C: Corporate Product Mentions

Excludes Web Sites and News Division Programming

	Baseline (CBS)	Disney (ABC)	G.E. (NBC)	T. Warner (CNN)	
% of total mentions	33.3% (7 of 21)	43.5% (10 of 23)	66.7% (14 of 21)	35.9% (23 of 64)	146.1%
vs. CBS baseline	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Difference	na	10.2%	33.4%	2.6%	46.1%

Table D: Valence of Corporate Product Mentions

Excludes Web Sites and News Division Programming

	CBS (CBS)	Disney (ABC)	G.E. (NBC)	T.Warn. (CNN)
Mean Valence of In-house Mentioned Items	-0.29	0.60	0.07	1.26
Mean Valence of Others' Mentioned Items	0.43	-0.38	-0.14	1.05
p-value of independent samples t-test	0.210	0.016*	0.705	0.016*

*p<.05

Valence scale:
-2: "Very Negative," -1: "Somewhat Negative,"
0: "Neutral,"
1: "Somewhat Positive," 2: "Very Positive"

Table E: Valence of Corporate Interest for Mentions

Excludes Web Sites and News Division Programming

	CBS (CBS)	Disney (ABC)	G.E. (NBC)	T.Warn. (CNN)
Mean Valence of Corporate Interest, In-house Items	0.00	1.90	0.93	1.87
Mean Valence of Corporate Interest, Others' Items	0.43	0.54	1.43	1.07
p-value of independent samples t-test	0.532	0.007*	0.532	0.003*

*p<.01

Valence scale:
-2: "Very Negative," -1: "Somewhat Negative,"
0: "Neutral,"
1: "Somewhat Positive," 2: "Very Positive"

Radio-TV

Constructing Class & Race in Local TV News

Don Heider
Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712
(512) 471-1965
donheider@mail.utexas.edu

Koji Fuse
Lecturer
Department Of Communication
Pittsburg State University
1701 S. Broadway
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762
(316) 235-4808
kjfuse@cpol.net

Abstract

Using participant observation and content analysis, the researchers looked at one local television newsroom to examine what role class and race played in news decision making.

Because of journalists' own position, inhabiting positions in the middle- and upper-middle classes, and because of phenomena such as targeted story selection and story avoidance, the authors' found that news coverage of the poor specifically and of the lower classes in general was significantly lacking. The researchers also found evidence of how news workers are making decisions about news, based upon what they perceive to be a particularly attractive audience for advertising.

Class, Race & Local TV News

"Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy . . .as if they were in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets..." Benjamin Disraeli

Class, as a concept in American culture, doesn't seem to carry very far. It's not a term that comes up all that often in day-to-day conversation. Does this mean America is a classless society? Are the majority of its citizens really middle class?

There are some behavioral indicators that seem to suggest the overall decline of social classes in advanced capitalist societies. For instance, Clark and Lipset discovered the declining trend of class voting, operationalized as a difference in voting for a party between two traditional classes, in all western democracies including the United States from 1940s to 1980s. They emphasize the fundamental power of capitalism, technological changes, and other sociopolitical factors to continually raise the living standard of the entire society, which caused the weakening of hierarchical class stratification and the furthering of fragmentation and individualism.[1] However, the question remains: What exactly do we mean by class?

Class is one of those terms we rarely define. It is much like the term "race." We use both, but if pressed might not be able to provide an exact set of operational definitions for either. Yet, we lead our lives based upon certain assumptions about both. We seem to have innate and often unspoken beliefs about what it means to be black or what it means to be middle class. What role do media play in what we come to believe about both race and class, and more specifically how does news influence these beliefs? That is the central question of

this study. It is often difficult to write and think about race as a social construct without also considering class. The media in general and news media in particular may have influence upon our ideas about what class is, therefore media also may provide an appropriate site at which we could examine how the idea of class is constructed and how class is covered in news.

For this study, the decision was made to enter into a local television newsroom to begin examining the way in which class was discussed and covered by broadcast journalists in one community. As well, during the study period, newscasts were taped and researchers completed a content analysis of those newscasts to help triangulate findings. The results offer some initial insight into local news and class.

Constructing Class

Let's start here: "Any social system that involves economic inequality will generate social classes."[2] In fact, there is ample evidence of economic inequality in the United States, especially given that this society is based upon an economic system that does not espouse any principle of fiscal equality. Further evidence points out that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening in the United States. Between 1970 and 1990, average income for families in the bottom fifth of the income scale dropped 5 percent. Meanwhile income among the top fifth shot up 33 percent. The median value of assets owned by families with incomes less than $25,000 fell between 1995 and 1998, while those families with higher incomes saw assets soar.[3] In addition, the increased size of clerical, sales, and service workers cannot be automatically construed as an expansion of the middle class, because they have been subjected to the same "deskilling" process that metamorphosed traditional craftsworkers into blue-collar workers. The average income of lower-level white-collar workers is much less than that of

blue-collar factory workers, which indicates a further proletarianization of the working class in general. Even the so-called "new middle class," including managers and professionals, may be in the same predicament as the working class, as we can see in the fact that the abundance of unemployed Ph.D.s has changed the hiring policy in academia, forcing them to accept low pay and heavy course loads.[4]

So if class distinctions exist, then how does one go about defining a social class? Marx and Weber both set forth models of how class systems work; each has been widely debated. Suffice it to say that each time a theorist tries to set forth qualifications to define boundaries for different class groups, such as the ownership of land, life chances, or income levels, exceptions to those qualifications can be found. Therefore the boundaries are almost always imperfect. For the purpose of this study, we will not attempt to talk about social classes as if they are rigid and well-defined groups. Instead in this case it may be helpful to think of class as the way in which people make distinctions between themselves and others, based primarily on perceptions about income, inherited wealth, status and vocation.

Even though most people may not know or agree on what exactly distinguishes one class from the next, it remains clear that each of us lives with beliefs about class, which social class we fall into, and where others fall as well. "Social classes and class structure are the most decisive forces that affect us in most everything we do in our lives," argues Berch Berberoglu.[5] According to research since the 1940s Americans have consistently identified themselves strongly with a social class.[6]

It should be noted, however, that underlying Americans' class identification are various lines of both visible and invisible class struggles, such as race, gender, age. Demands for pay equity, anti-discrimination in employment opportunities and workplace, and government

support for affirmative action all point to economic infrastructural deficiencies of the society.[7] Furthermore, as Patricia Hill Collins argues, these divisive lines of struggles intersect to engender more subtle systems of oppression: "Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination."[8]

In general, these are ideas we spend time thinking about more than talking about. "Class is not discussed or debated in public because class identity has been stripped from popular culture," writes Gregory Mantsios.[9]

There are, however, ways in which news media do refer to class. For instance, there are news stories, often in print media, about the poor. But researchers have found this coverage is not always fair and accurate. A. Scott Henderson found in a review of media coverage of the poor and public housing in poplar periodicals since 1965 that the press presented a distorted image of public housing, portraying an underclass made up of young African Americans who were most often socially dysfunctional. "In this respect, by associating public housing with poverty, crime, racial homogeneity, the popular press conveyed unambiguous messages to its readers, most of whom were white, middle-class, and suburban."[10]

Another way of dealing with class in an indirect manner is to talk about hunger. When it comes to media coverage of this issue, McMurray has written that coverage has been extremely uneven, from periods of great attention to periods where the subject disappears from view. McMurray contends that political climate, rather than the seriousness of the issue, is responsible for varied interest in the topic.[11]

Homelessness is a topic that has received more coverage in recent years than have others related to class. Blasi wrote that "images and issues relating to 'the homeless' seemed to have a power that issues of 'poverty' or 'housing the poor' did not." In looking at *New York Times*' coverage of homelessness, Blasi observed that early articles revealed the horrors of homelessness, then stories began detailing efforts to provide assistance, then coverage shifted to deficiencies of the assistance programs and of the persons expected to use them, and finally, more recent stories focused on subgroups of homeless such as mentally disordered and substance abusers, and on backlash against the homeless.[12] In other words, as time passed coverage became more cynical.

Welfare is a program that also symbolizes class. Martin Gilens has taken a detailed look at Americans' perception of welfare, which he concludes is often negative in no small part due to media coverage. In analysis of photographs used by leading news magazines, Gilens discovered that African Americans were consistently hugely over-represented in photographs accompanying stories about welfare.[13] Gilens concludes that because of Americans' persistent stereotypes of African Americans as lazy, there continues to be negative perceptions about welfare.

Another way of alluding to class may be through the way news stories refer to neighborhoods or sections of a city. Ettema and Peer found by studying newspaper coverage of two Chicago neighborhoods that the coverage of an affluent neighborhood was much more extensive than that of a poorer neighborhood. In addition, when it came to topics of stories, the poorer neighborhood had twice the amount of crime stories than the affluent neighborhood, despite a lower overall crime rate. Even when good news was reported in the poorer neighborhood, the story was reported as a response to some bigger, ongoing pathology.[14]

Though few U.S. media studies have dealt precisely with class, these studies do provide insight as to problems in regard to coverage of poverty, homelessness, and welfare.

Method

As mentioned earlier, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in this study. A researcher traveled to Denver, Colorado, a top-25 media market and spent one month in a television station newsroom as a participant observer. The researcher who visited the newsroom had spent ten years working in television newsrooms, therefore negotiating the setting was a relatively easy task. The researcher sat in on all weekday news meetings, observed behavior and conversations in the newsroom, went out on stories with reporters and photographers and conducted 19 in-depth interviews with news workers. "Qualitative interviewers listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work."[15] For each interview, a basic set of questions were used as a starting point, but as much as was possible the interview was conducted in a manner constructed to simulate a conversation. This allowed the news worker the greatest amount of flexibility in speaking about what was important to them in regard to news coverage, news decision-making and class. Anonymity was guaranteed to those interviewed as well as others observed in the newsroom.

To examine how the issue of class permeated in news stories, the researchers taped 5 and 10 p.m. newscasts aired on this Denver station in July 1998. This content analysis included newscasts that are considered to be the station's primary news products: 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. newscasts that aired Monday through Friday. It is these newscasts that receive the most resources and scrutiny from station personnel. In short, we analyzed what the station

itself considers its best news programs. Weekday newscasts were examined that aired between July 6 and July 28. All news stories in a newscast were examined and coded by two trained graduate students.

This content analysis placed a primary focus on the relationships between story topic, story location, demographic characteristics of a person covered in a news story, and the tone of his or her portrayal. Story topics included crime, disaster, human rights, the needy, the environment, education, politics/government, consumer, health, economics/business, weather, feature, and sports. A particular attention was paid to crime, the needy, and economics/business news stories, because those story topics were expected to relate to class issues.

Up to four people mentioned in a story were investigated regarding their race (Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, or others), estimated age (less than 10 years old, 10s, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, or 60s and over), gender (male or female), occupation (government, business, education, homeowner, professional, manual labor, clergy, or unemployed), and the tone of their portrayals (positive, neutral or negative). In addition to basic demographic differences, the study also focused on the target-audience age categories (20s, 30s, and 40s), and white- vs. blue-collar workers.

Other variables included newscast time (5 or 10 p.m.), geographic level of story topic (national or regional), running time in seconds, reference to class (yes or no), and reference to residence (yes or no).

The intercoder reliability ranged from .71 (story topic) to 1.00 (newscast time and reference to class). The average intercoder reliability was .91.

Because the original dataset (Dataset 1) allowed multiple people and locations to be coded in a story, three additional datasets were created. The first new dataset (Dataset 2) is

based on characteristics of a person covered in a story, the second (Dataset 3) based on a geographic location, and finally the third (Dataset 4) based on both a person and geographic location. In total, there were 672 stories, 660 people who appeared in news, 807 locations dealt with, and 859 combinations of a person and location. Then univariate characteristics and bivariate relationships were examined. This study, though exploratory, reported inferential statistics to observe strengths of such relationships.

Results

From spending time listening to conversations in the newsroom and discussions in news meetings it became clear early on that class is a topic, as discussed earlier, that is almost never mentioned. That does not mean however, that there are not ways in which class is implied through more covert means. One such way is through the editorial process of how news decisions are made.

Story Selection. One of the most obvious ways of examining how a news operation deals with the idea of class is to examine closely story selection and the story selection process. This newsroom, like other newsrooms observed, had a structure wherein news decision-making power resided in the hands of primarily a few managers. In any television newsroom, the news director generally sits atop the organizational chart. In this newsroom the news director had a set of managers directly under him, with four most directly affected news decision-making. They were the Assistant News Director, the Executive Producer, the night-side Executive Producer, and the Assignments Manager. These four, in consultation with the News Director, controlled most of the content on a day-to-day basis. Two or three of these four would most often attend two

daily news meetings, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Attending these meetings along with the managers, were the newscast producers. Each producer was responsible for a particular news program, for instance the noon show, or the 5:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. news. These producers had some decision-making power in regard to the content of their particular program. The managers would select the big stories of the day with input from others in the meetings, and it was often up to the show producers to fill in other, shorter, less significant stories that would make up the remainder of their newscasts.

Targeted Story Selection. In the month the newsroom was observed. One key finding was that in regard to class, there were stories that often fit into one of two classifications: those that were deemed worthy because of audience appeal and those that were not. It became clear that the news workers in this newsroom had a very specific idea of an audience. In other words, stories were often not selected with regard to a broad, wide-ranging and diverse viewership (which is, in fact, the audience of most local television affiliates with the major networks). Instead news workers had a very specific sense of a particular audience they were trying to appeal to. This first became apparent in listening to discussions in news meetings. Exchanges like the following were not uncommon:

> Producer: "I've got another Beanie Baby story off the feed."
>
> Executive Producer: "Perfect. That's your demo."
>
> Assistant News Director: "Get those women watching."

What was meant by demo was demographic. In other words, a particular viewer profile comprised of basic information like age and gender. In the 19 interviews with station

personnel that were conducted, 17 were with people who worked in the newsroom. Of those 17, 15 identified, when asked, a particular demographic profile of viewers they were trying to attract. The majority said women, though not all agreed on the age parameters of this group of women.

> "Women 18 to 49 is the target." (Producer)
>
> "It's women in the 25 to 45 bracket or 30 to 50 or something." (Reporter)
>
> "Women my age – 25 to 54." (Producer)

Women were perceived to be important because of a belief that they controlled decision-making when it came to household spending. Several of those interviewed also mentioned characteristics that indicated that there were class elements also involved in why this audience group was desirable.

> It's females, often young professionals, who make a pretty good living, who live in the suburbs. (Assignment Editor)
>
> Primarily adults 18 to 54 with a socioeconomic level that has been stressed to us. They want families with an income I guess of $30,000 and above and with 2.1 kids and 4-wheel drive in the garage. You know stations will boast about how much better their demographics are and how they have the higher demographics and the higher income. (Producer)
>
> Suburban, basically, people who are fairly young and have disposable income and children. (Assignment Editor)

The language here points to a fairly specific class profile. It points to a middle- or upper-middle income level family, who are home-owners, live in the suburbs and have disposable income. Many of those interviewed also had an idea of why this was considered to be an important part of the audience.

> I guess it is always the 18 to 44 year-old women, because they tend to buy everything and it's what people sell the advertisers. (Producer)

> Women 25 to 54. It's the demo to bring in dollars. One; for sales and two; to raise the ratings. It's the business side of things. We make personnel changes for that reason; we select stories for that reason. (Managing Editor)

The purpose of targeting this particular group is clear as this is perceived as the "demo to bring in dollars." Television stations have traditionally tried to not only convince advertisers that they have the highest ratings – the most viewers in their market – but also that those viewers are an attractive group of potential customers. In other words the pitch from station sales people to advertisers is: if you buy a spot in our local news, this group of people with this profile will see the spot and buy your product or service. The problem lies in whether stations can really deliver audiences that are that specific. Television was traditionally attractive to advertisers because it offered one of the widest and largest markets available. But with the advent of cable, the market became more segmented, especially as cable channels sought to target specific audiences to make up for a lack of sheer audience numbers.

Now it seems, in at least this one newsroom, having a target market audience has become part and parcel of how a newscast will be put together. This is at odds with the traditional view of the purpose of national and local broadcast news. Broadcast news in television was offered initially as a public service, specifically to help stations meet the FCC requirement that stations, since they were broadcasting over public airwaves, serve the public interest. Early on, norms of traditional print journalism were adopted. Eventually broadcast journalists developed their own codes of ethics, one version was codified by the Radio and Television News Director's Association. Under that code it states that broadcast journalists "will evaluate information solely on its merits as news, rejecting sensationalism or misleading emphasis in any form."[16] Yet given what news

workers reported here and what was observed in the daily news meetings, there is ample evidence each and every story is not evaluated on its merits primarily as news. Once you introduce the idea of a target audience, that becomes a filter through which decisions are made.

The news director defended this practice, arguing that the major news of the day remained untainted: "I would say that doesn't affect the basic coverage plan of the day." He argued that demographic considerations only came into play into the less important news of the day.

> Every day there's a series of stories that are elective. You know: do you want to do this, or do you want to do that? And I think from a business standpoint we have gotten people to think about running those stories through a filter – is this story interesting to people who we would like to watch our news more often?

But at least one news staffer disagreed with the news director's assessment. An assignment editor felt identifying a target audience was not in line with journalistic principals.

> I think sometimes in catering to target audiences you fail to present a fair and accurate portrayal of news. And let me say I don't think it is primarily a crime of culmination. It is a crime of omission. I think that a lot of times there is bias and it's not that the stories that aired are that stories are aired that should not be aired.

An example of this during the period studied was a number of stories and live shots that were done on an event called "The Parade of Homes." This was an annual event in Denver (as it is in many cities) that centers upon the promotion and sales of new homes. The only possible news value to the story was that the parade was taking place at an area that had been a military base, but had now opened up to new development. None of the homes featured in the parade were under $150,000, so it would be hard to argue that this

was a story that was of interest to each and every viewer. Each day when producers and managers dedicated resources and news time to covering the home show, that was taking away resources and time that could have been spent on other news stories. But it was easily rationalized because the marketing of attractive new homes fit easily into the idea of what was believed would be interesting to the stations target demographic: well-to-do professionals.

There were two separate, but not necessarily unrelated phenomenon taking place in news decision-making that affected news coverage with regard to class. The first, discussed above, demonstrates how news managers and producers often actively selected stories on the basis of whether they believed the story would appeal to a certain demographic profile of a viewer. We call this *targeted story selection.* The news staff has a target audience in mind, and news decisions are made in an effort to target those audience members in an effort to increase ratings and to allow advertisers to sell this more attractive audience to advertisers. The second phenomenon taking place comes in looking at not what stories are selected, but what stories are also **not** selected.

Story Avoidance. As was discussed earlier, class is not a topic that often comes up in daily conversations, let alone in news meetings. As other researchers have described, one way in which class manifests itself is in the way we think and talk about the poor. Therefore it became interesting to note what attention was given to lower socioeconomic areas in Denver, or how much attention was given to topics that would directly impact poor people.

During the four weeks of the study several stories were discussed that directly impacted what would be considered economically lower class people in the station's

viewing area. In each case, news workers opted not to cover the story. One particularly illuminating example came when the Environmental Protection Agency announced it was holding a meeting to discuss the results of some soil testing with residents of Denver neighborhood. The testing had taken place in a part of Denver called Swansea, known to locals as an area that had a high crime rate and was populated by the very poor. There was also recent historical significance to the story. In another area, Globeville, soil sampling had revealed high levels of contamination, and through litigation the American Smelting and Refining Company had eventually paid out $38 million for a clean-up. The EPA event was discussed at the morning news meeting. Several of the younger producers in the room did not know where Swansea was. The Executive producer asked: "Does anyone even speak English down there?" There was scattered laughter. This was a reference to the belief that the population was believed to be recent Spanish-speaking immigrants to the area. In regard to the story one producer said: "It doesn't blow my hair back." No one was assigned to the story and it was not covered. As a result, what was never reported by this station was that results from 3,550 soil samples showed in some properties in that area levels of arsenic and lead high enough to prompt the EPA to promise an extensive clean-up. By almost any journalistic standard, this event constituted a news story. About 75 neighbors attending the meeting and had at times, heated questions about their safety and their children's safety. The story was timely, it had conflict, it reflected impact on people, and it took place within the proximity of stations' coverage area. But this story did not fit one criterion: it might not have been appealing to an upper-class demographic. As well, this story did not occur in an area that impacted the news workers making this decision. In other words, no one in that meeting,

let alone in the station's newsroom lived in Swansea. Therefore, there was not a sense of urgency or fear among those making the coverage decision. The story did not impact them directly, and seemed far removed from the locations of their own homes, which they perhaps assumed were not built on soil full of contaminants. We call this phenomenon story avoidance, wherein a story comes up that by a number of different traditionally held news values should be covered, but is not.

Another example came not in the form of a story that was not covered, but *in the way* in which a story was covered. During the study period Denver suffered a long streak of days where the temperature was over 100 degrees. For this area, that was a fairly unusual occurrence. The station did extensive coverage, especially in regard to energy use. That much heat for that many days meant that energy use was breaking records. During the heat wave, each day in the morning meeting producers, managers and reporters would try to brainstorm what new angles they could cover. Because of the forecast, and the presence of meteorologists at the station, they knew in advance that the daily temperature was likely to be. During this period, only one story – about how firefighters were distributing free fans for anyone who needed them – touched indirectly on how poor people were affected by the heat. Day after day, the station would cover different aspects of the story without ever considering the impact on the group arguably most directly impacted by dangerously high temperatures: people who were living without air-conditioning.

One of the stations two parking lots was located a short distance from the building. That meant each day, many of the news employees would have to walk a half a block from their cars to the station. In the short walk, they passed directly in front of two

apartment buildings, neither of which had central air conditioning. During the heat wave, residents were often sitting on the front steps of the building, apparently trying to escape the heat inside the apartments. Despite the fact that journalists walked passed these people daily, it was never suggested in a news meeting that talking to some of these people or others so directly affected by the heat would be newsworthy. The station at one point did a live shot and reporter story about how the local zoo was taking care of animals in light of the high temperatures. This seemed particularly ironic, considering many zoo animals come from hot and arid regions of the world.

It would be difficult to argue that how poor people were impacted by a heat wave is not a newsworthy story. Yet the story was never discussed in a weekday news meeting and was as a result, never covered. This is another example of story avoidance, wherein an important aspect to a news story is overlooked, in this case, repeatedly.

News Content. Our content analysis conducted of the newscasts during the study period provides additional evidence of the lack of coverage of the poor.

Class in News Stories (Dataset 1). Regional-level news accounted for 65.2% (N=438), about twice as many as national-level stories. The average broadcast time was 69.5 seconds, but 59.2% of news stories were less than one minute long. Its median was 45 seconds.

Table 1 shows the distribution of TV news stories according to topics. One of our focal topics – crime – was the top news topic, representing more than one-fifth of news stories. Economics/business came the fourth, which was dealt with in more than 10% of stories. "The needy," however, had the second smallest share of news stories, accounting for only 1.9%. Furthermore, only nine (1.3%) out of 672 stories made direct references

to class. None of the nine stories, however, mentioned people's residences. These results seem to substantiate our qualitative findings of newsroom decision-making processes to avoid class stories in general.

Class in Demographics of People (Dataset 2). Three hundred fifty-two news stories referred to at least one person, containing 660 people in total. Table 2 shows distributions of demographic characteristics of those people. They were predominantly white and male. The largest age category was the 30s, and professional occupation represented more than a half of people in news. Their portrayals were mostly positive. These characteristics represented the most "typical" combination of attributes of people mentioned in news stories, accounting for 7.6% (n=50). Regarding age, the TV station's target audiences, who were in their 20s, 30s, or 40s, accounted for approximately three quarters (72.4%, n=451), although the percentage of people in their 20s was quite small. Also manual laborers constituted a small portion of people in news (4.7%, n=18), which reflects the diminution of traditional blue-collar workers in our society.

Due to a small frequency of each non-white category, the variable race was dichotomized into Whites and non-Whites. Contrary to our expectation, minority members were not strongly associated with such "class" topics as crime, "the needy," and economics/business.

However, older white males seemed to occupy the focal attention in the TV representation of the world, which signifies their high status in the hierarchical class ladder. As Table 3 shows, Whites tended to be old while non-Whites were more likely young. The largest racial difference was among people of age less than 20. In addition, the mean broadcast time was longer for Whites than non-Whites. See Table 4. Similarly,

males received the longer mean broadcast time than females, although the difference was not as great as that of race.

Yet, gender did affect which age category one would be in. As Table 5 shows, males tended to be older, the largest difference observed among people of ages less than 20. Although less than 10% of males were younger than 20, approximately one quarter of females were in this age category. In short, "men age gracefully."

Contrary to our expectation, manual laborers were not associated with "class" news topics. Whereas only one (5.6%) out of 18 manual laborers appeared in these types of news, 140 (38.2%) our of 367 white-collar workers were included. The largest news topic was human rights (33.3%, n=6) for manual laborers, and crime (27.3%, n=100) for white-collar workers. Also only two (11.1%) of manual laborers appeared in news stories that made direct references to class. The vast majority of those blue-collar workers were white (94.4%, n=17) and male (83.3%, n=15), who received positive coverage (77.8%, n=14).

In order to delve into bivariate demographic relationships for "class" news topics, people who appeared in crime, "the needy," and economics/business stories were examined (N=283). Table 6 shows the relationship between age and race. Compared to Table 3 that exhibited for all news topics the largest racial difference in the youngest age category, it was the oldest age category that had a disproportionately higher percentage of minorities than Whites (27.3% vs. 11.8%). On the other hand, the category of people of ages between 20 and 49 showed a much higher percentage of Whites than minorities (71.8% vs. 54.6%).

Table 7 shows the relationship between age and gender in "class" news topics. Similar to Table 5, males tended to be older than females in "class" topics. Differences in news topics did not seem to affect this bivariate relationship.

These findings alone might not have been very telling, but linked with the observations made in the newsroom, they tend to confirm that, as least at this station during the study period, stories on the poor are avoided and coverage of whites is disproportionately strong.

Class and News. This brings us to consider why and how news decisions were made in regard to class. As discussed earlier, it was clear that some decisions were made based upon the emphasis of trying to appeal to a certain part of the audience. But even when a target demographic did not enter into the spoken discussion of a story idea, there was another dynamic at work. In morning and afternoon editorial meetings, in discussions in the newsroom, in management meetings, there was consistently one group never represented: the poor. One reporter put it this way: "It's just not a view that's represented at our editorial meetings. It just isn't something we consciously forget or actively ignore. It's just sometimes it can be a very difficult viewpoint to get advanced." This newsroom, like many newsrooms, was staffed by people who could easily be classified by almost any method as middle- or upper-middle class. Every person interviewed was college-educated, and an analysis of home addressees of news employees revealed the vast majority lived in the suburbs in areas identified by census figures as middle- and upper-middle income neighborhoods. One producer said this:

> A lot of us don't come from poor backgrounds. A lot of us don't understand that and don't think those people watch. You know, we do

> homeless stories when the weather gets cold and so forth because it is something we can feel compassion for. But on a day-to-day basis we aren't going to do a lot of those stories.

When questioned about it, news workers themselves were aware of the coverage deficit.

> As a general rule no, I don't think we cover poor people very well. Since none of us are poor we don't think of them. We don't think of what they are doing in the heat or in cold weather, for example. (Assignment editor)

It comes down to whether each day, as managers and other newsroom personnel consider what might be covered, they are concerned with people who are from different class backgrounds, who live different experiences, who face a different set of daily realities especially economically. The station's Managing Editor was forthright:

> I don't think we run from it but I don't think we think about it. It's not like we're committed to helping them improve their lives or get the assistance they need. If a story comes up and fits into our day where we can go and cover it we might pick it up. But I can't even tell you the last package we've done on it.

What became evident in observing the newsroom, from sitting in on news meetings, and from interviews with station workers, was there was a consistent lack of knowledge and in some cases care about people especially from what could be considered lower class economic backgrounds. A young news writer at the station seemed to have a full understanding of the problem:

> It strikes me as we just don't know. Or some of us do know but aren't at the morning meetings to say anything which is a mistake. Somehow we've got to get that knowledge or get our hands on that knowledge of we don't know it and that knowledge comes in various ways. It comes culturally, it comes through various contacts whether environmentally or politically or whatever. You can never have enough people who have that knowledge, and that's something we have to work on.

Conclusion

In 1979 Herbert Gans published a seminal study of news decision making titled *Deciding What's News*. Gans studied two networks news programs and two national news magazines. He found that "the news especially values the order of the upper-class and middle-class sectors of society."[17] Because of journalists' own position, inhabiting positions in the middle- and upper-middle classes, Gans wrote that they represent best their own perspective, and not those of the lower classes.

In this study we found evidence to support Gans' contention on a local television news level. Because of phenomena such as targeted story selection and story avoidance, we contend that news coverage of the poor specifically and of the lower classes in general in this one market was sorely lacking. One could argue as well that because many of these news workers had worked in other stations in other markets and reported similar attitudes and philosophies, this may not be an isolated case to this one station in this one city.

We began this paper from a quote from Disraeli, talking about two nations who know nothing of each other. The two nations of which he speaks are the rich and the poor. Toward the end of the 20th century, the American economy was enjoying record gains. Whether those gains were helping America's poor, or whether this era meant a larger disparity between the haves and the have-nots, the public might have difficulty knowing, it what was found in Denver is replicated in other television news operations around the country. In this market, at this station, news is constructed as a product aimed at being of interest to primarily those who have disposable income, live in the suburbs, and have significant purchasing power.

TABLE 1
Frequencies of Story Topics

TOPIC	Number of Stories (*N*=672)	Percentage
Crime	147	21.9%
Sports	80	11.9%
Weather	75	11.2%
Economics/Business	69	10.3%
Consumer	59	8.8%
Feature	53	7.9%
Politics/Government	51	7.6%
Disaster	39	5.8%
Health	35	5.2%
The Environment	32	4.8%
Human Rights	13	1.9%
"The Needy"	13	1.9%
Education	6	0.9%

TABLE 2
Demographic Characteristics of People Who Appeared in News

RACE (*N*=655)	AGE (*N*=623)	GENDER (*N*=653)	OCCUPATION (*N*=387)	PORTRAYAL (*N*=629)
Whites 81.5%	>10 1.6%	Male 72.7%	Professional 56.1%	Positive 61.5%
Blacks 11.0%	10s 10.6%	Female 27.3%	Government 28.9%	Neutral 22.4%
Hispanics 5.8%	20s 5.0%		Manual Labor 4.7%	Negative 16.1%
Asians 1.2%	30s 41.3%		Business 4.4%	
Native Am. 0.5%	40s 26.2%		Education 2.1%	
Others 0%	50s 12.7%		Homeowner 2.1%	
	60s & over 2.7%		Clergy 1.3%	
			Unemployed 0.5%	

TABLE 3
Crosstabulation of Age by Race

AGE	Whites *n*=510	Non-Whites *n*=109
Younger than 20	10.4% (*n*=53)	21.1% (*n*=23)
Between 20 and 49	73.5% (*n*=375)	67.0% (*n*=73)
50 and Older	16.1% (*n*=82)	12.0% (*n*=13)

χ^2(Pearson)=9.930, d.f.=2, *p*=.007; total *N*=619

TABLE 4
Mean Broadcast Time by Race and Gender

RACE	Mean Air Time in Seconds (Standard Deviation)	T-value
Whites (*n*=534)	110.5 (66.6)	3.16, d.f.=653, *p*=.002
Non-Whites (*n*=121)	89.5 (63.5)	
GENDER		
Male (*n*=475)	109.1 (69.9)	1.83, d.f.=382.6, *p*=.069
Female (*n*=178)	99.2 (57.6)	

TABLE 5
Crosstabulation of Age by Gender

AGE	Male *n*=446	Female *n*=171
Younger than 20	7.9% (*n*=35)	23.4% (*n*=40)
Between 20 and 49	74.0% (*n*=330)	68.4% (*n*=117)
50 and Older	18.2% (*n*=81)	8.2% (*n*=14)

χ^2(Pearson)=33.086, d.f.=2, *p*=.001; total *N*=617

TABLE 6
Crosstabulation of Age by Race in "Class" News

AGE	Whites *n*=220	Non-Whites *n*=44
Younger than 20	16.4% (*n*=36)	18.2% (*n*=8)
Between 20 and 49	71.8% (*n*=158)	54.6% (*n*=24)
50 and Older	11.8% (*n*=26)	27.3% (*n*=12)

χ^2(Pearson)=7.744, d.f.=2, *p*=.021; total *N*=264

TABLE 7
Crosstabulation of Age by Gender in "Class" News

AGE	Male *n*=193	Female *n*=72
Younger than 20	11.9% (*n*=23)	29.2% (*n*=21)
Between 20 and 49	70.5% (*n*=136)	65.3% (*n*=47)
50 and Older	17.6% (*n*=34)	5.6% (*n*=4)

χ^2(Pearson)=14.921, d.f.=2, *p*=.001; total *N*=265

[1] Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Are Social Class Dying?" *International Sociology* 6 (December 1991): 397-410.
[2] Mary R. Jackman and Robert W. Jackamn, *Class Awareness in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), 8.
[3] "The Nation in a Time of Plenty, the Poor are Still Poor," *New York Times*, 23 January 2000, 3.
[4] Alvin Y. So, "Recent Developments in Marxist Class Analysis: A Critical Appraisal," *Sociological Inquiry* 65 (November 1995): 322-323.
[5] Berch Berberoglu, *Class Structure and Social Transformation* (Wesport: Praeger, 1994), vii.
[6] Mary R. Jackman and Robert W. Jackamn, *Class Awareness in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), 40, 69.
[7] Alan J. Spector, "Class Structure and Social Change: The Contradictions of Class Relations in Advanced Capitalist Society," *Sociological Inquiry* 65 (November 1995): 334-337.
[8] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 226.
[9] Gregory Mantsios, "Class in America: Myths and Realities," in *Race, Class and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study, ed.* Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 202.
[10] A. Scott Henderson, "'Tarred with the Exceptional Image':Public Housing and Popular Discourse, 1950-1990, in *American Studies*, 36 (spring 1995): 31-52.
[11] Dan McMurray, "The Several Faces of Hunger: A Review of the Amount and Types of Information Available to the Public on Domestic Hunger, 1967-1990, in *National Journal of Sociology*, 5::2 (winter 1991): 92-109.
[12] Gary Blasi, "And We Are Not Seen: Ideological and Political Barriers to Understanding Homelessness," in *American Behavioral Scientist,* 37 (February 1994): 563-586.
[13] Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[14] James Ettema and Limor Peer, "Good News from a Bad Neighborhood: Toward an Alternative to the Discourse of Urban Pathology, in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,* 73 (winter 1996): 835-856
[15] Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data,* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage) 1995.
[16] RTNDA Code of Ethics, unanimously adopted by the RTNDA Board of Directors on August 31, 1987.
[17] Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. (New York: Pantheon) 1990.

Going Digital: An Exploratory Study of Nonlinear Editing Technology in Southeastern Television Newsrooms

Seok Kang
George L. Daniels
Tanya Auguston
Alyson Belatti

University of Georgia
Department of Telecommunications
Athens, GA 30302

Presented to the Radio-Television Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Phoenix, AZ, August 9-12, 2000

For inquiries:

George Daniels
gdaniels@mindspring.com

This paper was supported in part by the Michael J. Faherty Broadcast Management Laboratory Department of Telecommunications University of Georgia

Special thanks to Dr. Eric Haley, Associate Dean of the College of Communications, University of Tennessee-Knoxville for making presentation of this paper possible.

Going Digital: An Exploratory Study of Nonlinear Editing Technology in Southeastern Television Newsrooms

ABSTRACT

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has mandated that all broadcasters convert to a digital standard by 2006. This exploratory study of a stratified sample of large, medium and small market television newsrooms in the southeastern U.S. examined the progress toward converting to nonlinear editing. The findings show conventional wisdom may not apply to the way stations are making the shift to the digital standard. Instead, cost is probably a bigger indicator of who will be the "innovators" and "laggards" in going digital.

Going Digital: An Exploratory Study of Nonlinear Editing Technology in Southeastern Television Newsrooms

The time of change is now in the mass media industry as broadcasters nationwide convert to the digital standard. For some stations, buying into the digital technology involved building a new digital television tower and purchasing millions of dollars worth of new equipment. *Broadcasting & Cable* labeled the first 35 stations that started broadcasting a digital signal November 1, 1998 as "digital pioneers" because of the strides they made in advancing digital technology (McClellan, 1998). The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has mandated that all broadcasters convert by 2006. While engineers and station managers work out the details of transmission, those running the nation's newsrooms have their own set of challenges relating to the digital conversion. Digital television means acquiring, storing, and producing news content with new equipment. A key piece of that new equipment will be a nonlinear editing set-up whereby editing video will be done with the click of a mouse on a computer desktop instead of on a traditional tape machine. Nonlinear editing utilizes a computer hard drive for storage of video instead of a traditional tape.

This exploratory study of nonlinear editing suggests a way to look at how stations are introducing the new technologies related to the conversion to the digital standard. Because of challenges in making the switch to digital such as cost and location of transmitter space, some stations have made the transition quicker than others. Having this type of information would be helpful to industry regulators charged with deciding whether the 2006 deadline is realistic. Converting to the digital standard requires purchasing equipment and a study to find out where stations are accomplishing that task would provide evidence of the likelihood that stations will or will not meet the deadline. It would also put to rest concerns some might have that stations will not be ready.

At the same time, journalism educators would benefit from knowing to what extent digital editing instruction should be a part of their broadcast journalism curriculum. A recent survey of journalism educators showed nearly half think technology issues have been inadequately taught (Scott, 1995). It can be argued that more and more technology is driving journalism instead of journalism driving technology. Whether or not journalism schools which teach broadcast production are providing instruction in digital technology depends on the school and its resources. If most journalism faculty keep up-to-date on the field by reading literature (Oskam, 1996), one might ask how will they know what types of technological platforms are being used in the newsroom if little has been written on the status of the digital transition in the television newsroom.

This two-stage exploratory project involved both elite interviews with those on the commercial and non-commercial side of the broadcasting business and a telephone survey of newsroom managers. Because of the ever-changing nature of the digital conversion, a station that is using analog equipment today may literally be using digital equipment tomorrow. Therefore, a study which simply describes what standard stations are using may quickly become outdated. Since much of the television news business revolves around the size of market in which a station is located, particular attention is paid to market size in this study of nonlinear editing.

Review of Literature

Rogers (1962) defines innovators as those who are the first to adopt new innovations. For more than 30 years, Rogers' definitions and descriptions of innovation in his seminal work, *Diffusion of Innovations* have been applied across disciplines by researchers examining the adoption of a new innovation (Neuendorf, Atkin & Jeffres, 1998; Atkin, Jeffres, & Neuendorf, 1998; Lin, 1998). He identified five adopter categories on the basis of innovativeness. Besides innovators, there were the early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The categories each represent a

percentage of adopters of new innovations—ones that could be applied to the study of technology introduction in the television newsroom.

A growing body of research exists on the subject of technology introduction in the workplace, particularly in those which focus on news media and the telecommunications industries. For those working at newspapers, pagination was the new technology of the 1990s. Russial (1994) measured the length of time editors spent on electronic editing. Of particular concern was whether or not pagination in the newspaper newsroom reduced the amount of time in editing. He found that even though pagination enabled editors to save time and enhanced design flexibility, it also required them to modify the structure of editing tasks.

In 1994, Underwood, Giffard and Stamm conducted a survey of newspaper editors, which investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and perceived changes due to pagination. They also tested the relationship between productivity and introduction of new technology. The study found that the introductory stage of pagination was slow, but once it was adopted, the product resulted in better outcomes (Underwood, Giffard, & Stamm, 1994).

A survey of 375 senior executives, news editors, and reporters in newspaper, radio, television, and cable found most were excited about new technologies' ability to cut costs, do tasks faster, and make the news glitzier. However, the Louisiana State University survey did not find the strong link between the new technologies and how it might enhance the quality of news reporting (McMullen, Fletcher, Hamilton, & Ross, 1994).

In their 1998 study, Kraut, Rice, Cool, and Fish surveyed 135 people in an organization using an unusual type of telephone, which provided an image of the person on the other end of the phone. They found when using the new video telephony technology, social interaction among users was very important. Consequently, the organization was restructured to the point where decisions were made in a different

manner. All this occurred as a result of workers being able to see each other as they used video telephones (Kraut, Rice, Cool & Fish, 1998).

No doubt the growing number of academic studies on technology introduction in the media and telecommunications industries are a direct result of what is occurring in the thousands of media workplaces as the digital standard now takes hold. Much of the discussion in the trade press is over how this phenomenon is playing out in the way workplaces operate.

CNN News Group, with the recent introduction of Avid Technology's AvidNews as the new newsroom computer system for CNN Headline News, expected that the system would provide increased functionality to the newsroom by decreasing editing time and costs (Dickson, 1996). Such new technologies as Digital Television, Avid Technology, Comprompter, and NewsMaker System in broadcasting industry have made the equation "to a publisher, time is money; to an editor, time is quality" more complex (Russial, 1994).

Daniels (1999) examined how workers at CNN Headline News adjusted to the new AvidNews computer system as well as the five other major newsroom changes. Among them was a switch to a pre-recorded or digitized format for airing what were previously live news broadcasts aired 24 hours a day. By using the CNN Headline newsroom workers as an exemplar, Daniels isolated which management and personnel factors most reflected how a worker will react to change. He found that management's communication of the change was negatively related to how secure a worker might feel about his or her job. On the other hand, there was a strong relationship between managers' explanation of how the change fits in with the long-term goals of the newsroom and how a worker subsequently feels about management and the company.

Some researchers have addressed the more technical issues surrounding the broadcast station switch to the digital standard. Pescatore (1999) studied the options broadcasters face with the advent of DTV and the various options they faced as they

implemented the digital standard. Among the examples cited in his study was Raleigh, North Carolina's WRAL-HD, the first commercial station to operate an experimental high definition television facility. That station has had success with "multicasting," or broadcasting more than one signal at a time. Since Pescatore's study was published, another station has become the first to broadcast local newscasts in HDTV (Kerschbaumer, 2000). KOMO-TV shoots and edits local news with widescreen picture, a reality that every station will face once it switches to HDTV.

The KOMO-TV management called itself "putting a stake in the ground for the viewer" (p. 46) when it made the leap to the unprecedented HDTV mode of operation. It was, no doubt, years ahead of other television stations, some of which were still shooting and editing on 3/4-inch analog tape as the year 2000 began. Meanwhile, news feed services like NBC Newschannel recently broke new ground by introducing a digital news feed for their affiliates. Instead of having its satellite feeds recorded on analog tape for later playback, NBC video is now stored on hard disks it can be accessed by a local affiliate. CBS Newspath, the counterpart to NBC Newschannel, planned to start a similar system for its affiliates in the second quarter of 2000 (Murrie, 2000).

The literature on the prevalence of nonlinear editing in television newsrooms and its incorporation into the broadcast journalism curriculum is sparse. A 1996 survey showed nonlinear computer based editing systems accounted for almost half of the editing production workload at various media locations. Those locations included not only television newsrooms, but also production houses. Gutenko (1997) reported significant challenges were involved in including nonlinear editing instruction in the journalism curriculum. Difficulties with delivery and initial set-up of equipment, maintenance, and slowness of student editing were a few of those challenges.

Research Questions

The introduction of new digital technologies like those at KOMO or that NBC Newschannel presents some key questions for those interesting in technology introduction in the media workplace. Non-linear editing was one major new technology that would serve as an indicator of where a particular newsroom is in the journey to the digital standard of operation. Specifically, three main research questions guided this exploratory study:

RQ_1: What systems do broadcast stations currently have for shooting, editing, and playback?

RQ_2: How familiar are newsrooms with non-linear editing technology and its potential effects on their operations?

RQ_3: What changes are likely to result from the introduction of non-linear editing into the local newsroom?

Hypotheses

Because of the cost of making the digital conversion, smaller stations might be expected to take the "wait-and-see" approach of 'laggards' in the diffusion of innovation process (Rogers, 1962). Meanwhile, larger stations, which generate more revenue than smaller market stations, are expected to be innovators. Therefore, the following hypotheses were tested in the study:

H_1: TV stations in large markets (Size 1-35) will be more likely to have adopted non-Linear editing, than are stations in small and medium markets (Size 36 and higher).

H_2: News directors at TV stations in the smaller markets (Size 101 and higher) will be more likely to cite costs of the new technology as the biggest barrier to its adoption in their newsrooms than news directors in large and medium markets (Size 1-100).

Method

Part one of this study involved conducting elite interviews with media managers both in the commercial and non-commercial broadcast settings where non-linear editing had been introduced. The elite interview subjects were from CNN Headline News, Georgia Public Television and WSMV-TV (Nashville, Tenn). The findings in those interviews were used to develop a telephone survey which was administered as the second part of this exploratory study.

Newsroom managers (i.e. news directors, chief photographers, assignment managers) were surveyed at stations identified by using multi-stage systematic random sampling. In the first stage, the sample was stratified by region. Seventy-five newsrooms were selected out of 129 stations in the southeastern United States that, according to the 1997 edition of *Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook*, had a local news department. Based on the *Atlas Geographical Book 1997* , the southeastern states were Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

In the second stage, the sample was stratified by market size. Stations in market sizes one to 35, according to *Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook*,. were classified as large market stations. Those in markets 36 to 100 were categorized as medium market stations. Stations in markets101 and smaller were placed in the "small" category. Twenty-five stations from each market category were randomly selected by the researchers using systematic sampling. The best response was from the large market sample where 20 of the 25 stations contacted were willing to participate. This yielded an 80 percent response rate for the large market sample. Only 10 of the 25 medium market stations participated, a response rate of 40 percent. Finally, 14 of 25 stations in the small market sample were willing to participate in the telephone survey, a response rate of 56 percent.

Only stations that produced at least one half-hour local newscast daily were included in the sample. In some instances, the 30-minute local newscast was produced by

another station in the market, but aired exclusively for the station included in the sample. The stations produced anywhere from one 30-minute newscast to 6 1/2 hours of news per day. Information about the network affiliation of the 44 stations that participated in the study included in Table 1.

FINDINGS

RQ1: What kinds of systems do broadcast stations currently have for shooting, editing, and playback?

Overall, most stations (52.3%) were still editing on analog Beta format (see Table 2). In terms of analog video, Beta had become the industry standard. What the findings in this exploratory study show is that many stations have yet to move their operations into the digital age. This was particularly the case for most large markets where only 10% were using DV-format to shoot and edit video. Of the 14 small markets, half were using Panasonic's DVC-PRO to shoot and edit their video. The medium markets were also shooting and editing mostly on Beta. Because of the small sample, it is hard to generalize these results to all television stations.

RQ2: How familiar are newsrooms with non-linear editing technology and its potential effects on their operations?

Based on their responses to a series of statements describing one's knowledge of non-linear editing, most newsroom managers believe those in their operations are familiar with non-linear editing technology and its potential effects on their operations. The varying degree of familiarity rested with those who relied on trade press and industry gossip as opposed to those who actually tried out the equipment to see if it would work for them. Only 33 percent of newsroom staffs were "using non-linear editing to produce a limited number of stories." In their open-ended answers, more than one respondent who had adopted non-linear editing did not find the outcomes they initially expected. One

common concern was that non-linear editing would require digitization (converting analog video to digital format), which would slowdown the news production process. At the same time, some of those stations which had tried the technology or used it found that the expected delay was not a real problem.

When examining the stations market-by-market, there appeared to be no significant difference between large markets' and small markets' use of non-linear editing. For instance, both stations in the sample from markets 22, 33, 35 and 60 were using some form of non-linear technology, while only two of three of the stations surveyed in markets 10 and 16 had a limited knowledge of the technology. The issue of market size and use of non-linear editing technology was examined more closely in testing Hypothesis 1.

RQ3: What changes are likely to result from the introduction of non-linear editing into the local newsroom?

At the time these data were gathered, many respondents were not able to answer this open-ended question. Better feedback was gained from newsroom managers asked why stations adopted (or did not adopt) non-linear editing ? One medium market station expected the non-linear editing to eventually allow them to edit more stories for their newscasts. One large market station was the only station to voluntarily mention the idea of changing jobs and job roles, a key expectation of those who have studied change in the newsroom (Daniels, 1999).

One large market newsroom manager, who expected non-linear editing to affect jobs and job roles, predicted that videotape editors will have to be cross-trained on other tasks such as writing. Additionally, producers will have the capability to select soundbites and do other basic editing at their desks, eliminating the need for the number of editors who were responsible for such tasks, under the analog system.

On the issue of which jobs might be affected by the introduction of non-linear editing, it seemed logical those positions which actually have editing as a requirement would be most influenced. When asked which job roles in their newsroom had "editing as a requirement," an equal number (40%) of small and medium market stations required line producers to do editing. On the other hand, when asked if line producers have editing as a requirement of their job, 57% of the large market stations said "no." More than half of those respondents who indicated anchors and reporters were required to edit were in the small market category. These findings were consistent with conventional wisdom in the television news industry that says, the larger the market, the more specialized the newsroom roles.

The conventional wisdom about specialization of roles in larger markets is much like the assumption one might make about the large market stations' use of the cutting edge technology. Resources are perhaps the biggest reason for the disparity between stations in different size media markets. Newsrooms in top ten markets run on million-dollar operating budgets equal to the entire station budgets of smaller-market stations. In that light, two hypotheses on the relationship between market size and introduction of the non-linear editing technology were tested in this study.

H1: TV stations in large markets (Size 1-35) will be more likely to have adopted non-linear editing, than are stations in small and medium markets (Size 36 and higher).

The data do not support Hypothesis 1. Eighty-five percent of the large market stations surveyed used traditional linear technology (See Table 3). Only three of 20 stations in large markets used non-linear editing. The picture was much the same among the medium and small markets. Of the eight stations surveyed who only used using non-linear editing, an equal number (three) were in small and large markets.

When it comes to video acquisition, seven of the ten stations shooting on DV-Format were in small markets (See Table 2). An equal number of large market stations

were in transition. These findings, while not generalizable to all television stations would help to debunk the "bigger is better" argument when it comes to introduction of technology. One reason for this might be the reality that given the digital standard, it is most prudent for any station to purchase digital equipment now. To invest in new analog equipment because of wear-and-tear of old equipment would almost seem like a waste of money for any station, regardless of size. Instead, stations of all sizes apparently are opting for the equipment they know they'll need in the future.

There appeared to be a curvilinear relationship between the number of newscasts produced per day and the use of the non-linear editing technology. As Figure 1 shows, most of the stations, which indicated they use non-linear editing fell in the middle range of stations in terms of how many half-hour news programs they produced. In other words, stations which produced the least and the most amount of news were less likely to try the non-linear technology.

H2: News directors at TV stations in the smaller markets (Size 101 and higher) will be more likely to cite costs of the new technology as the biggest barrier to its adoption in their newsrooms than news directors in large and medium markets (Size 1-100)

The data do not support Hypothesis 2. In fact, quite the opposite was true. The small markets from our sample were less likely than the large markets to identify cost as a barrier to the adoption of non-linear editing. One newsroom manager offered a possible explanation for this. She indicated she would expect small stations to adopt non-linear technology faster than large stations because the amount of financial outlay would not be as great. This particular manager recalled the transition from 3/4 to Beta tape occurring in her top ten market operation within a 24-hour period. In other words, a decision was made and the entire large operation was switched virtually overnight.

In this study, many of the large market stations were well-informed about non-linear technology, but less likely than the small market stations to employ the technology.

At the same time, many small market stations were less informed but willing to adopt the technology because considered it the wave of the future. Overall, more than 25 percent of those managers responding indicated they "went to or are planning to go to non-linear editing" because it was the 'wave of the future.' Need to operate in a digital television station was cited multiple times as an event that prompted the switch to non-linear editing technology. At the same time, there were some stations which perceived, at the time the data were collected, that the jury was still out on the non-linear technology. In fact, a quarter of the respondents cited either financial issues or simple skepticism about the technology as reasons why they were not ready to convert their facilities for non-linear editing. Ease of editing process, expense in converting entire newsroom, and necessity to convert an entire building were all barriers respondents identified to making non-linear editing a reality in their newsrooms.

Discussion

The most significant finding generated in this exploratory study is the fact that a small number of large AND small market stations are both moving toward nonlinear editing. The "bigger is better" argument did not hold up in this research. The cost of introducing a digital technology would be expected to influence a station's decision to make the transition. Thus, those stations most able to afford the equipment would be expected to be first in adopting the technology. What the data here show is that those most able to afford the equipment may also be hesitant to be the innovators because of the amount of financial outlay.

If small market stations are moving into the digital age as fast as large market stations, could this place the smaller operations in a different category when it comes to quality of product ? The perception of smaller market stations as possibly being "behind the times" may be changing, at least in the interim, as the industry "goes digital." Of course, not all small market stations are making the switch. When asked why his small market station was not moving toward nonlinear editing, one respondent quipped "it is totally ridiculous to be asking those questions to small markets." While this follows the conventional wisdom, the data in this study show there is simply no real predictor of which stations might be the "innovators" and which ones might be in the "laggards" if Roger's (1962) Diffusion of Innovations categories were to be applied to the adoption of the nonlinear editing technology.

Another interesting finding is how those who are using non-linear editing are utilizing the technology. Some stations have clearly chosen to make the transition incrementally, by first changing video acquisition to a digital format (i.e. DVC Pro) but continue to edit the final product on traditional analog tape. On the other hand, other operations are taking tape acquired through traditional BETA analog tape and digitizing it for storage and broadcast from a computer server. The concern about nonlinear technology requiring digitization (converting analog video to digital format) is interesting to note. This could have serious implications for the newsroom processes that will result in a story making it, or not making it, on-air. Among some of the large market stations, which had not yet implemented the nonlinear editing technology, there was the concern about having the switch over equipment in remote vehicles while also changing equipment at the station. This amounts to an additional financial outlay.

The curvilinear relationship between stations that are using nonlinear editing and the number of newscasts produced (Figure 1) would suggest that there may be two scenarios where nonlinear editing has not been introduced: those stations producing a very small amount of news content and those producing a large amount of content. For the former, the reasons may center on the real need for the expense of the nonlinear system when only one 30-minute newscast is being produced a day. Intuitively, the opposite would appear true, especially given the situation with stations on the other end of the curve who also have not implemented nonlinear editing—the amount of news was too much to make the shift to nonlinear right away. In other words, the stations only producing a 30-minute show would intuitively be best able to experiment with the technology and not sustain the costs of the newsrooms producing a lot of local news content. Given the small sample size and thus, the inability to generalize the findings, we can only speculate what the curvilinear relationship might mean.

In addition to what these findings mean for newsroom managers, there are some implications for broadcast journalism educators. Besides the obvious mandate for training students in the nonlinear editing technology, there is the need to be aware how many stations have not yet gone to the technology. Given Gutenko's (1997) challenges with implemented nonlinear editing as part of the advanced production class, one has to ask how urgent is the need to teach students the technology if many of them will not use it ? At the same time, the data here suggest a few small market stations, where many students get their first jobs, are among the leaders in implementing nonlinear editing. Should students gaining entry-level positions in these small markets be expected to arrive on the job knowing this nonlinear equipment ?

Limitations

It is important to stress caution in generalizing the findings in this exploratory study of stations in one geographic region of the U.S. A relatively small sample of 75 stations was drawn. With only 44 stations responding, the ability to do a full statistical analysis of the findings was limited, if not impossible. In other words, it became difficult to determine if any of the percentages and correlations were statistically significant.

Furthermore, it became apparent to the researchers why little research has been conducted on technology in the television newsroom. Obtaining such information was extremely challenging, given the constraints of an operation that is almost constantly on deadline. Unlike the newspaper, where there is typically one edition per day, the television newsroom has news broadcasts around the clock. The research team attempted to identify non-newscast times when newsroom managers were more likely to be willing to answer questions in the survey. However, even that strategy proved difficult to execute. Only stations in the southeastern United States were surveyed. The decision to limit the population to this region was based on ability to draw some connection between those who responded. However, the drawbacks in doing so were the lack of top ten market stations and small market stations in that sample. Most of the markets tended to fall in the middle. This is precisely why the equal number of stations (25) was drawn from the small, medium and large categories.

Conclusion

This project was aimed at identifying a way to determine where television newsrooms are in the process of switching to the digital standard. As an exploratory

study, emphasis was placed on possible scenarios for local television newsrooms. The small sample size makes it impossible to generalize these findings. What the findings in the sample drawn here do show is that conventional wisdom may not apply to the way stations are making the shift to the digital technology. Instead, cost is probably a bigger indicator of who will be first to introduce technologies such as nonlinear editing than the size of the station market..

The results of this study must now be used to design a larger national study with an emphasis on the more conceptual issues of market size and other predictors for adoption of the digital technology. A longitudinal panel study could also be designed using the 44 stations in this exploratory study. Perceptions about innovations or new technology are other topics which could be explored. Again, a simple descriptive national study would be less useful because of the rate at which the technology is being introduced. Future research might also apply various aspects of the Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovations paradigm to the area of newsroom technology adoption.

References

Atkin, D. J., Jeffres, L. W., & Neuendorf, K. A. (1998). Understanding Internet Adoption as Telecommunications Behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 42 (4), 95-112.

Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook (1998). New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker.

Brown, S. (1998, February 3). Living large in 1997: TV, Radio Post Records for Multiples, Broker investment. *Broadcasting & Cable*, 32-34.

Carroll, R. L. (1989). Market Size and TV News Values. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66(1), 49-56.

Daniels, G. (1999). *Managerial and Personnel Factors in Television Newsroom Workers' Response to Change*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Georgia, Athens.

Dickson, G. (1996, May 13). WDJT-TV up and running with Avid: Startup news operation chooses nonlinear network. *Broadcasting and Cable*, 61.

Dickson, G. (1996, March 25). Headline News Goes to the Disk, *Broadcasting & Cable*, 74-75.

Gutenko, G. (1997). *When an AVID Makes You Rabid: Restructuring Media Production Curricula in Response to the Nature of Nonlinear Video Editing*. Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Media and Technology in Education. Vancouver, British Columbia.

Kerschbaumer, K. (2000, February 28). A Broad View of the News: Seattle's KOMO-TV Shoots and Edits Local News With Widescreen Pictures, *Broadcasting & Cable*, 46.

Kraut, R. E., Rice, R. E., Cool, C., & Fish, R. S. (1988). Varieties of social influence: The role of utility and norms in the success of a new communication medium. *Organization Science*, 9 (4), 437-453.

Lin, C. (1998). Exploring Personal Computer Adoption Dynamics. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 42 (4), 95-112.

McClellan, S. (1998, March 9). Ready and not, here comes DTV. *Broadcasting & Cable*, 29-35.

McMullen, R., Fletcher, A., & Hamilton, J.M. (1994, October 31). Survey: Efficiency Valued Over News Quality. *Broadcasting & Cable*, 26.

Murrie, M. (2000, February). Digital News Feeds On Demand. *Communicator*, 54 (2), D1-D4.

Neuendorf, K. A., Atkin, D., & Jeffres, L. W. (1998). Understanding Adopters of Audio Information Innovations. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 42(1), 80-93.

Oskam, J.B. (1996). How Educators Keep Up-to-Date with Changes in the Field. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 51 (1), 45-53.

Pescatore, M. (1999). Broadcast Options for the Transition to Digital Television. *Feedback*, 40 (4), 1-7.

Rice, R. E. (1987). Computer-Mediated Communication and Organizational Innovation. *Journal of Communication*, 37 (4), 65-94.

Robey, D. (1977). Computers and management structure: Some empirical findings re-examined. *Human Relations*, 30 (11), 963-976.

Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe. 3rd ed.

Russial, J. T. (1994). Pagination and the newsroom: A question of time. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 15 (1), 91-101.

Scott, S. D. (1995). The Technological Challenge for Curriculum and Instruction. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 50 (2), 30-40.

Underwood, D., Giffard, C. A., & Stamm, K. (1994). Computers and editing: Pagination's impact on the newsroom. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 15 (2), 116-127.

Williams, F., Rice, R. E., & Rogers, E. M. (1988). *Research Methods and the New Media*. New York: Free Press.

Table 1. **Network Affiliation of Stations in the Sample**

	ABC	CBS	NBC	FOX	WB	Total
The Number of Affiliates	11 (25.6%)	12 (27.9%)	12 (27.9%)	7 (16.3%)	1 (2.3%)	44 (100%)

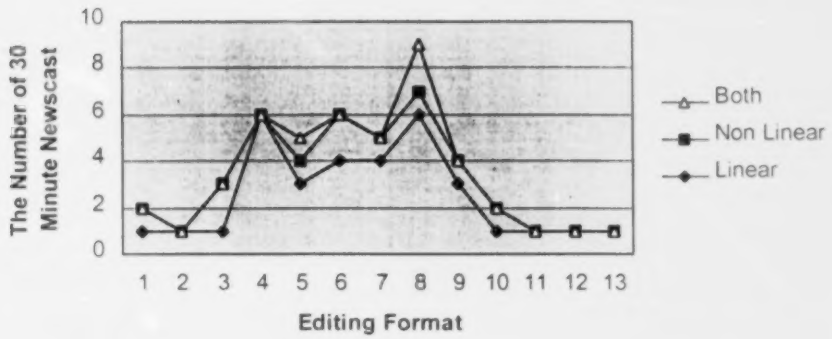
Table 2. **The Relationship between Market Size and Acquisition**

	Small Market	Medium Market	Large Market	Total
Beta	6 (42.9%)	6 (60.0%)	11 (55.0%)	23 (52.3%)
Hi-8		1 (10.0%)		1 (2.3%)
VHS or Super VHS	1 (7.1%)	1 (10.0%)		2 (4.5%)
DV-Format (DVC-PRO or SONY SX)	7 (50.0%)		2 (10.0%)	10 (22.7%)
In Transition			7 (35.0%)	7 (15.9%)
Non of the Above		1 (10.0%)		1 (2.3%)
Total	14 (100%)	10 (100%)	20 (100%)	44 (100%)

Table 3. **The Relationship between Market Size and Editing Format**

	Small Market	Medium Market	Large Market	Total
Linear	10 (71.4%)	6 (60.0%)	17 (85.0%)	33 (75.0%)
Non Linear	3 (21.4%)	2 (20.0%)	3 (15.0%)	8 (18.2%)
Both	1 (7.2%)	2 (20.0%)		3 (6.8%)
Total	14 (100%)	10 (100%)	20 (100%)	44 (100%)

Figure 1. The Relationship between the Number of Newscast and Editing Format



DEREGULATION AND COMMERCIAL RADIO NETWORK NEWS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Richard Landesberg
Ph.D. Student
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Office phone: 919-244-1154

Home Address:
106 Eagle Meadow CT
Morrisville, NC 27560

Home phone: 919-468-0908
Email: lberg@unc.edu

Paper presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division
AEJMC
Phoenix 2000

DEREGULATION AND COMMERCIAL RADIO NETWORK NEWS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

RADIO-TELEVISION JOURNALISM DIVISION
AEJMC
Phoenix 2000

ABSTRACT

The once vibrant and vital business of commercial radio network news is now a declining industry controlled by just two companies. Yet, radio remains a main source of information for many Americans. This study analyzes the consolidation and decline in commercial radio network news and the role of regulation in that decline. It approaches the subject using qualitative methodology to explore the views of network news radio professionals, both journalists and managers.

It was a scene in black and white from a time of innocence and war. The period was the first half of this century; the location was the American living room. The family was gathered around the radio, listening to network reporters talk about Hitler and war in Europe. Radio was the dominant medium and continued to dominate as long as the pictures remained in the mind of the listener. When the pictures became part of the medium, radio started to fade as television ascended.

In commercial network radio news today, these are the facts:

- Roughly 90 percent of the industry is controlled by just two companies, CBS and ABC
- The number of independently owned and operated commercial radio networks has gone from six to two in less than 20 years
- Any radio station owner can hold as many as eight stations in one market
- There are no limits on how many stations any one owner can hold nationwide
- Americans still spend a lot of time listening to the radio

For most of its existence, commercial radio was one of the most regulated industries in the United States. Unique among American media that served a First Amendment function of informing the public, radio and television broadcasters operated at the pleasure of the government and had to follow strict government rules. For radio, those rules started disappearing about 20 years ago.

This study examines radio regulation, and subsequent deregulation, as it applies to a very narrow part of the business, commercial radio network news. It focuses on consolidation in commercial radio network news and the effect that has had on the news American's hear on the radio.

This study asks the question:

1) From the perspective of commercial radio network news professionals, how have deregulation and radio network consolidation changed commercial radio network news and its traditional role of operating in the public interest?

IMPORTANCE

In general, radio shows no sign of weakening or disappearing. The average American spends more than three hours a day listening to the radio and has five radio receivers at home (Bartlett, 1998). The National Association of Broadcasters claims radio reaches 77 percent of people over the age of 12 everyday and reaches 95 percent of consumers weekly (NAB, 1998).

Radio remains popular if, for no other reason, than the fact that television and the Internet, and even newspapers, lack a certain amount of portability, making them difficult media to deal with while driving on the freeway or taking a shower. With a medium so pervasive as to travel with us to and from work every day, the impact of radio news, or the lack of radio news should not be underestimated.

With deregulation a relatively new government policy, and its pace increasing dramatically with the Communications Act of 1996, quantitative data is almost non-existent, and that which is there is difficult to assess in light of rapid changes in the industry. Studies have looked at how news has changed on local radio stations but there have been no studies of commercial radio network news. It is therefore the objective of this study to qualitatively analyze the impact of changes in regulation in order to answer the research question. This study looks at the decline of this once powerful voice and the impact on its practitioners and news consumers through the perspective of leading network radio news practitioners.

This study will reveal the feelings and attitudes of present and former network radio journalists caught in the consolidation that now puts CBS Radio in the position of operating five formerly independent radio networks.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RADIO REGULATION

Understanding the recent changes in radio regulation requires the perspective gained from knowledge of the history of broadcast regulation. Regulation of radio started before voice transmission was a regular part of the medium. The Wireless Act of 1910 was the first U.S. government attempt to regulate broadcasting. The Act required all large ships visiting U.S. ports to install radio equipment by July 1, 1911(White, 1999). Enforcement of the Act fell to the Department of Commerce and Labor's Bureau of Navigation. Radio regulation would remain a Commerce Department function until the Federal Radio Commission was formed in 1927.

The radio age started on October 27, 1920 with KDKA, Pittsburgh that was, at that time, the only U.S. radio station "licensed to render a regular broadcasting service"(Barnouw, 1968).

A number of conferences preceded passage of the radio act of 1927, the first regulation aimed at radio broadcasting. Prior to passage of that act, all it took to gain a radio frequency was a postcard to the Commerce Secretary, Herbert Hoover, who would then assign a frequency and hours of operation.

The Federal Radio Act of 1927 sought to "maintain the control of the United States over.... radio transmission... but not the ownership thereof, by individuals, firms or corporations". Owners only held rights to broadcast as long as their licenses were valid. The act is clear about how Congress viewed radio, saying "the commission, from time to time, as

public convenience, interest, or necessity requires..." can regulate radio in a variety of ways (Act, 1927). Section 9 calls for the granting of licenses "if public convenience, interest or necessity will be served thereby." In other words, the public owns the airwaves and broadcasting should be consistent with the public interest.

The law creating the FRC was designed to be temporary and had to be renewed each year by Congress or the FRC's power would revert to the Commerce Department. Congress was not comfortable with the "independent" part of this independent regulatory commission. Each year, as the legislation came up for renewal, representatives changed parts of the bill, holding hearings for the purpose of further restricting broadcasting (Ginsburg et al., 1991).

The tenuous nature of the Radio Act of 1927 clearly indicated the need for some more permanent way to regulate this fledgling industry. It took seven years, but eventually Congress passed the Communications Act of 1934. The first section of the law stated its purpose as "regulating interstate and foreign commerce in communication by wire and radio" in order to develop a "rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication system"(Act, 1934). It is clearly stated that the regulation of the medium is in the best interest of the government and is vital to the national defense.

The Communications Act of 1934 created the Federal Communications Commission, taking all the regulations applying to radio that had been scattered throughout the government and putting them under the umbrella of the FCC. The FCC had far broader authority than the FRC that it replaced. In addition to radio, the FCC had control over interstate telephone and telegraph services. But title III of the act, "Special Provisions Relating to Radio", is very much like the Radio Act of 1927, again saying that the medium is to be operated in the public interest. The rationale behind the regulation was that the broadcast

spectrum was a scarce resource, belonging to the public, which broadcasters were allowed to use as long as they did so in the public interest.

The Communications Act of 1934, and the FCC, kept broadcasters in line for decades, with requirements on how much "non-entertainment" programming must be broadcast each day, limitations on the number of radio stations any one company could own, and regular license renewals which required that stations ascertain the needs of the communities they served.

In 1938, the FCC began the chain broadcasting investigation or monopoly probe (Barnouw, 1968). The investigation ended three years later with the FCC deciding that there should be more competition in radio, more ideas should be expressed, and the best way to accomplish this would be through licensing policies that prevented concentration of ownership. The commission was concerned that local control of radio was being ceded to the New York run networks.

The FCC only has power over broadcast stations. A network does not, on its own, broadcast over the air. It distributes programs to radio stations that broadcast over the air. But the commission was determined to break up what it saw as great power concentrated in the hands of CBS and NBC. The FCC wanted NBC to divest itself of its secondary network, the "Blue" network, and took a back-door approach to exerting its power. Having no authority over the NBC network, the FCC issued a ruling that no *station* could get licensed if it was affiliated with any network running more than one network (Barnouw, 1968).

NBC challenged this regulation aimed at diminishing the concentration of power in radio networks (Creech, 1993). The network argued that the FCC went beyond the regulatory powers granted in the 1934 Communications Act. The court ruled in favor of the FCC and

made a significant ruling about the commission's power. The court said that the FCC is not just a traffic cop dealing with technical standards. It also has the duty to choose who gets to use the limited broadcast spectrum. This was the first broadcasting case to come before the high court and established the FCC role in defining the public interest in the limited broadcast spectrum. This is a fundamental aspect of broadcast regulation (Creech, 1993).

REGULATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of diverse voices, even in the unregulated business of network radio, was an unchallenged policy of the FCC until the 1980s. In 1981, the Federal Communications Commission started deregulating radio (Fisher, 1998). No longer would operating a station in the "public interest, necessity and convenience" include requiring broadcasters to set aside a small percentage (5-10-percent) of their day for non-entertainment and news broadcasts (McManus, 1994).

That opened up a whole new world for radio stations owners, suddenly unshackled from federal regulation which mandated what type of news and non-entertainment programs a radio station had to run for a part of the broadcast day. What followed is a phenomenon radio industry people call the transformation of the medium from broadcasting to narrowcasting. Narrowcasting is the niche formula stations use to attract a specific audience, no longer getting everyone in the tent the way so-called "full-service" radio stations had for years.[1]

With stations no longer needing to run news in order to retain their government licenses, those precious minutes devoted to the latest headlines could be used to program more music, talk or commercials. That meant, of course, that many stations would no longer find it

[1] The "full-service" stations of years gone by would play music and then break for news at some point each hour. The name derives from the fact that they offered everything a listener could need or want. Even the

necessary to have a news network provide national newscasts and the advertising spots that go with them. The 1981 deregulation also made what had become a fairly routine license renewal process even easier for radio station owners. The term of a radio station license was increased from three to seven years, giving owners a 99-percent chance of renewal (Tunstall, 1986).

Throughout the 80s and into the 90s, the FCC continued to deregulate radio, steadily dropping the limitation on how many stations a network or group can own. The last bit of deregulation, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, set no limits on the number of stations any one entity can own nationwide. In fact, one group or network can own as many as eight stations in one broadcast market. When, in 1940, the FCC first set a limit on the number of licenses that one owner could control, the limit was six stations nationwide (FCC, 1983).

The deregulated atmosphere of unlimited ownership of stations directly contravenes the FCC policy upheld by the Supreme Court in 1943. The policy at that time was aimed at diversity, making sure as many voices as possible could be heard on the airwaves. The current policy is strictly market driven, saying that the market can best decide how many different voices are heard on the air. This change in thinking was well articulated by the FCC when it took up the issue of cross-ownership of radio and television stations, relaxing the rules prohibiting one owner from having both radio and television in the same market. While retaining the prohibition, the FCC said, in 1989, that it would look favorably on relaxing the rule on a case-by-case basis. It took a looser, more market driven approach " to reflect the tremendous growth in the number and types of media outlets in large and small markets in the 18 years since the rules were last examined by the Commission" (FCC, 1989).

---

stations targeted at the youngest demographics would have news and public affairs programs in order to keep their FCC broadcast license.

Traditionally, the FCC restricted ownership to prevent any one network or owner from monopolizing the scarce, public resource of the airwaves. After the initial limit of six stations to one owner the FCC soon set the limit at seven-AM and seven-FM stations, with no owner allowed to hold more than one radio station in any market. In 1984, the FCC changed the rule to twelve of each. In changing the rule, the commission cited what it called "truly extraordinary" growth in radio and TV outlets since the early 1950s. It further stated that the "elimination of the Seven Station Rule poses no threat to the diversity of independent viewpoints in the information and entertainment markets" (FCC, 1984).

Less than 10-years later, the rule was liberalized more when, in 1992, the FCC changed to 18 and 18. By 1994, the limit increased to 20. Under the 1996 Telecommunications Act passed by Congress, there are no restrictions on the number of stations any owner can hold (Overbeck, 1999). In the eighteen months following the 1996 act, there were more than one thousand mergers in the radio industry (Taylor, 1998).

Deregulation came amidst a general government policy, started during the Carter Administration with Airline deregulation, and which gained momentum during the laissez faire years of the Reagan Administration, which said the market, not government, should regulate business. Deregulation also exists amid a climate of free-market economics bolstered by looser government attitudes toward anti-trust. According to Steinbock, the courts increasingly look at mergers in terms of "market impact" (Steinbock, 1995).

Even 25 years ago, the Federal Trade Commission said there must be some "measurable impact on competition" before anti-trust laws are invoked. Deregulation of radio was aimed at making the industry more market driven and less dependent on government regulation for the way that it operates. The market demands that costs be minimized and

profits maximized. In radio, where costs are the same if you reach a lot of people or very few, there is an economy of scale to be realized by spreading costs over a number of different stations. In a system where the technology prohibits the building of new stations, the only way to realize that economy of scale is through mergers and acquisitions. One study of radio, but again not of commercial network radio news, shows that radio station mergers have made radio a very healthy medium, while raising the cost of advertising on radio, as ownership continues to be concentrated in the hands of the very few (Drushel, 1998).

Despite all these changes, the FCC has not changed its view that the broadcast spectrum is a scarce commodity to be operated in the public interest, a view that dates back to the Federal Radio Commission. How that scarce commodity is to be parceled out, has changed over the years. No longer does the government take the lead, which is now left up to traditional business forces in the marketplace.

There are a number of scholarly looks at what the new, concentrated ownership of the media means to consumers and to industry, with much of the focus on newspapers. There is no sense of what this means to the surviving commercial radio news networks. Almost half the people polled nationwide report regular usage of the radio for news (Stempel & Hargrove, 1996). This would seem to indicate that people are still seeking out that medium for information.

Much of the literature closest to this topic looks at television or group ownership of local radio stations. The telecommunications Act of 1996, which lifted the old limit on how many stations one company could own nationwide, is a topic that has been addressed but not in terms of network radio news (Shane, 1998).

While all of these studies of media concentration are applicable to radio network news, none has it as a focus. If there is any mention at all, it is merely in passing or concentrated in the trade press (Fisher, 1998; Grossman, 1998; Taylor, 1997, Rosse, 1999 #96 etc.). Even the trade press tends to concentrate on local radio (Aversa, 1999; Gitlin, 1996; Petrozzello, 1997; Prato, 1996 etc.).

Washington Post Radio writer Marc Fisher has an extensive overview of how news is disappearing on local radio (Fisher, 1998). While he concentrates on local news, he also deals with the news suppliers, the radio networks.

The closest study to the topic of this research paper is an *American Journalism Review* article by Lou Prato (1996). He explores the current strength of radio news but doesn't delve into many of the editorial aspects and future prospects of the industry.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to establish the perspective of radio news network professionals, from across the spectrum of jobs, on the issues surrounding the decline of radio network news. The qualitative methodology of interviewing was used to learn the thinking of these professionals. This type of data, which go beyond numbers to thought processes on the decline of commercial radio network news, could not be uncovered by gathering quantitative data. The context these interviewees provide cannot be measured in any statistical way.

Qualitative methods are used to understand the unmeasurable. In this case, it is the reaction to the decline of radio network news as measured by different participants in the process. This kind of methodology is properly used when there are few research subjects (Walker, 1985). It is mainly concerned with identifying and describing a range of opinions and behaviors and does not concern itself with how many hold a certain view, or how strongly that

view is held. The findings are presented in terms of impressions gained. Rather than firm conclusions, the findings are supported by evidence in the form of verbatim quotes (Morton-Williams, 1985). The object of the in-depth interview is to get people speaking freely about their opinions, knowledge, feelings and experience (Patton, 1990).

The approach is the long interview as outlined by McCracken (1988). These professionals have little time so the long interview, designed for penetrating analysis without prolonged contact, is well suited to provide a manageable methodological context. By talking with the interviewees in this manner, the technique elicits the testimony these radio professionals might otherwise have difficulty articulating. As McCracken says, the long interview in qualitative analysis "tells us what people think and do, not how many of them think and do it" (P.49).

Those interviewed for this study were carefully selected to represent a cross-section of radio network jobs as well as "survivors" and "non-survivors" of radio consolidation and deregulation. Due to the inherent limitations of time and money, the interviews concentrated on a very narrow group consisting of people involved in the first news network mergers, Mutual and NBC Radio, that eventually led to the mega-merger with CBS. All of those chosen were in the industry before the first deregulation of 1981 and worked in the business during the deregulated era.

Of the eight interviews of commercial network radio professionals used in this study, four of the interviews were conducted in person, with the interviewees asked to pick a time and place they would feel most comfortable and relaxed. Two picked their office, one wanted to talk outside on a warm, autumn day, and one wanted to talk at her home, after work. Four interviews were conducted on the phone. Two of the phone interviews were conducted during

business hours with people in their offices. The other two interviewees were called at their homes. One is retired. The other is working on his Ph.D.

WHO THEY ARE

Norm Pattiz is the Chairman of Westwood One. In many ways, he can be looked upon as the person who started the recent wave of network radio consolidation. A radio syndicator, he bought the Mutual Broadcasting System in 1985. In 1987, Pattiz became the first radio network owner to control two different networks in almost 45 years. Ironically, it was Westwood One's purchase of the NBC Radio Networks that put Pattiz in that position.

Westwood One also owns the two biggest providers of local news, Metro Networks and Shadow Traffic. Westwood One distributes NBC Radio, CBS Radio, Mutual Broadcasting System, Unistar and CNN Radio. A management agreement puts CBS in charge of running Westwood One.

Barbara Porter is Director of Public Affairs at George Washington University, a job she has held for just over one year. Before that, she had been a news anchor for NBC radio for nine years. She also worked for AP radio and UPI radio. At UPI, Porter was news director. Her other experience included working for newspapers and major market radio stations. Porter started in broadcasting in 1977.

Bart Tessler is the Vice President of news for Westwood One. He started with the forerunner of the company in 1975 and has spent his entire broadcast career with the company in its various incarnations. He is currently responsible for overseeing the news product of Westwood One and negotiating with the company's vendors, such as the Associated Press. He no longer has direct responsibility for the news product.

Rachael Myers Lowe is Managing Editor for Westwood One. Her current responsibility is to manage and edit the Westwood One and CBSRadio.com web sites. She has been doing this for the last 18-months, ever since the Mutual/NBC Radio newsroom in Arlington, Virginia, was closed down. Prior to that, she was the Assignments Manager for Mutual/NBC Radio, a job she was promoted to after holding a series of increasingly more responsible positions with the network. Myers Lowe started with Mutual in 1978. She worked in radio since college in 1976.

Mike McKinley started in radio in 1968 at a college radio station in Michigan. He has done TV as well as radio, working for CBS, NBC, and ABC. His responsibilities included reporting, assignments and producing. McKinley worked for Mutual as a news anchor for five-years, until 1982. He later worked as a University professor before being hired by the National Association of Broadcasters, the broadcast industry-lobbying group where he worked from 1993 until August of 1999.

David Bartlett is Director of Global News Services for World Space Corporation. The company provides programming and satellite leasing for direct satellite-to-radio broadcasting in the third world. Bartlett was Program Director for NBC Radio from 1986, before the take-over by Westwood One, until 1988. He was then vice-president for news for NBC Radio. From 1989-1997, Bartlett was head of the Radio-Television News Directors Association. He started his career in local newspapers and radio and has worked in broadcasting for about 30 years.

Jim Bohannon is host of a nationwide, late-night radio show heard on hundreds of stations coast-to-coast. He started working for Mutual at its then Chicago owned station, WCFL, from 1980-83. He then went to Mutual headquarters in Arlington. Bohannon started

his radio career in 1960 at a small radio station and continued on through larger markets and then to the network.

Dick Rosse was Senior News Correspondent when he retired from the Mutual Broadcasting System in 1998. He had been with the company for 36 years and had announced his intention to retire just before the company shut down its Arlington newsroom in 1998. He worked as a reporter, news anchor and bureau chief for Mutual.

INTERVIEW CATEGORIES

The interview subjects can be broken down into three categories:

1) Those who view the world of radio network news as a business.

2) Those who are trained as journalists but have jobs or perspectives that force a hybrid view of the industry as both a business and a journalistic endeavor.

3) Those who view radio network news strictly through the journalist's lens, seeing radio network news as a calling that should, at least at times, transcend business considerations.

Pattiz falls into the first category. Tessler and Bartlett are in category two. Myers Lowe, McKinley, Bohannon, Porter and Rosse are in category three.

It should be no surprise that people who have jobs where the business of news is their responsibility should frame the issue in business terms, and that those with primarily editorial functions should frame it in journalistic terms. What is interesting, but again, not surprising, is how the business is perceived. It is a "product" to those with the biggest business interest.

In their interviews, the two highest placed managers, Pattiz and Tessler, frequently refer to "the product" or "products." Pattiz used the word 17 times; Tessler uses the word 30 times. Among those who spent, or are spending, the bulk of their careers on the editorial side,

McKinley used the word "product" five times, Bartlett used it twice, and the rest use it three times each. Rosse, the one interviewee who started in network radio news when the industry was perceived as less profit-driven, never refers to network news or network news programs as "the product."

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

When Pattiz first bought Mutual and then NBC, it started a chain of commercial radio network mergers that now sees two companies overwhelmingly dominating that marketplace, CBS (which operates Mutual, NBC Radio, Unistar Radio, CBS Radio and controls sales, budget and affiliates for CNN Radio) and ABC. It is only because the FCC switched from strong regulation to virtually no regulation that this has been allowed to happen.

As one might expect, those involved in the upper echelon of management frame the changes in radio network news in the language of business. For Pattiz, it was a matter of survival of the fiscally fittest. He says, "the move to consolidate by purchasing NBC was really a move that was more for the benefit of the company than it was thinking long term about the effect it would have on the industry. The fact of the matter is that both Mutual and NBC were networks that were losing a lot of money every year. They were not successful networks. Had we not purchased Mutual or had we not purchased NBC, especially in the case of NBC, I think the network would have gone away. We not only, by purchasing those networks, created two entities that went from losing money to making money, but I think, in the case of at least one of them, and probably both of them, we kept those networks around a lot longer than they probably would have been under different circumstances. Certainly up until the time when we went through our next consolidation phase when I bought Unistar, and then after that when Mel (Karmazin) got us the management rights for CBS, I think that the

nature of network radio was such and continues to be such that, 50-percent of the radio stations that are affiliated to our networks don't carry the product.[2] It was even more than that when we bought NBC and when we bought Mutual. That's not healthy. So by consolidating the 2 companies, by making them more cost efficient, putting the news gathering and the back-office functions together, it allowed us to keep both of those brand names on the air even though the product was very much the same. Had we not been able to do that, I think both brand names and both product lines would have disappeared"(Pattiz, 1999).

Of course, the next round of consolidation did force those network brand names to disappear. Pattiz says that the earlier consolidation kept them alive 10 years longer than they would have otherwise survived. The conversation with Pattiz, as well as Tessler, is often punctuated, as one might expect, with references to the marketplace as well as the "product."

HYBRID VIEW

Tessler echoes Pattiz in recognizing the power of the marketplace, characterizing the concentration of ownership as "fewer players, stronger players, pretty much meeting the needs of the marketplace because, at the station ownership level, it's changed so much as well. There is no doubt that there has been tremendous consolidation in radio network news. It's consolidated the operation, which leads to editorial consolidation and business consolidation. It's allowed companies to grow and purchase more products or have relationships or be responsible for more products. In general you do have fewer companies, much more financially solvent, very strong businesses that can really make a difference now producing a news

[2] In many cases, stations don't have to "clear", or carry, the shows offered by a network. Networks sell commercial time on those shows based on the audience to be delivered by stations clearing the show. The fewer stations clearing a show means the lower the advertising rate on that show because the audience is that much lower. It should also be noted that radio ratings don't take into consideration whether a network newscast has been aired by a station. The ratings only consider whether the commercials sold for the newscast have been run on the station. In other words, a station can run the commercials and not the newscasts and the ratings will show the same thing as if the program itself had been run.

product. Where before you absolutely had more players, making less of an impact, less financially solvent" (Tessler, 1999). Tessler looks at the necessity for change in order for the business to survive.

Bartlett also frames the issue in terms of business but he has a different take on deregulation and consolidation. He says deregulation was just a response to the marketplace, not the other way around. In his words, "A lot of people contend that radio stations dropped news and public affairs programming as soon as the FCC deregulated and allowed them to do it. The fact is that, prior to the FCC deregulation, they hadn't dropped the news commitment because the license required it. But they simply placed all the newscasts between midnight and 4 AM and put the usual public affairs show at 9 AM Sunday morning. I think it's the kind of thing where, if anything, the government's action to deregulate simply reflected catching up with what was already happening in the market anyway. We gotta run news so lets stick it overnight." For Bartlett, with the rise of youth-oriented FM radio and fragmenting of the audience, "It no longer made any economic sense to be a full service radio station" (Bartlett, 1999).

JOURNALIST'S VIEW

Bohannon picks up on the issue of the market but sees it from a very different perspective from management. "Deregulation at its bottom line has really been a worship of the marketplace. We used to talk about the free enterprise triad of capital, management and labor, but really these days, labor is barely tolerated, management is somewhat tolerated though they too face their perils, often with parachutes of a golden hue. Capital is worshipped. That's considered all that matters, do you make money?"

Bohannon says he opposed the lifting of regulations requiring stations to carry news. He says, at the time, he had two reasons for his opposition. " There is the altruistic reason and the selfish reason. Selfishly, there are going to be fewer radio news jobs. It's going to hurt us. Altruistically, it's going to hurt the country because at the time, there was a mandate that any station in the country that had a license to broadcast had an obligation of so many hours a week of news and so many hours a week of public affairs programming. And granted, they always buried the public affairs programming on Sunday morning, but they did it. They performed it. And news, sometimes stations tried to bury news but a lot of stations made a lot of money, frankly, with a good news product and a good sales force. And I said (at the time) there will be a lot of stations out there that will decide this is a blank check to go juke box, the public be damned, we will stick cotton-candy for the brain in their ears and that will be the end of it. And I believe that events have subsequently justified my viewpoint."

While making clear that he is a capitalist and is not against making profit he still says, "when people answer every argument about this with, look profits have never been higher, they totally miss the point. I don't care. I don't care. There's more to life than that. In fact, if that was the case, how come your wives and daughters aren't out on the street selling their bodies because, clearly, you could be maximizing your profit. To which, aghast, of course they would say, we can't do that. And you know why, don't you? Because they do have some standards, just not regarding what the public needs to know. They do have standards. But what the public needs to know is not part of them"(Bohannon, 1999).

With McKinley, the emphasis starts to shift. He frames the issue of consolidation and its effect on the radio network news industry in terms of the public interest. "There's more emphasis again on the ratings, more emphasis on making money and less emphasis on meeting

what I consider the Federal guidelines of Public Service...I think the concentration of ownership, the emphasis again from the owner's perspective, has been not so much on meeting their public service obligations, because I don't think the owners are really concerned with meeting those obligations. They're not really concerned with keeping the public informed regarding issues going on in their local markets. They're more concerned about selling advertisements so they can make the necessary money to meet their huge debts that are hanging over their heads." entertainment and less on informing their listeners" (McKinley, 1999).

Myers Lowe approaches the impact of deregulation on the industry not in the framework of business, but in the framework of journalism. "When I first started, we were chasing news, we were writing stories, we were generating news and putting it on the air. We'd go out and set up the microphones and actually cover news conferences. We had a pretty large staff as I recall. We would be there with a crowd of other like folks. Now, this is a 20-year jump, with consolidation, and consolidating, for the bottom line, companies being bought up, you sit in a cubicle and it all comes to you. You don't see the person who is holding the news conference, you are not asking questions. If you were to compare the audience for a news conference today to 20 years ago, it would be 1/10 the size" (Myers Lowe, 1999).

Myers Lowe also looks at deregulation in terms of what she sees as the impact from dropping the requirement that stations carry news. "Radio stations, in order to have their licenses, had to support public affairs programming on their stations and that meant even if it was just one or two people on their news staff. A lot of our (MBS) affiliates were small stations but they had news departments. As an editor and producer, if I had a story breaking somewhere you could feel pretty confident that when you called the station there was a news

person there who could help you on the story, go out and do reports, get you contacts, whatever. It just seemed like the difference between night and day with the lifting (of regulations) all of these news people seemed to have been fired, every single one of them. I think it was maybe one, two years maybe three at most when station management realized they didn't have to provide this (news). And they didn't because it is a personnel intensive job that costs money. It didn't cost a whole lot of money because believe me you weren't paid too much."

The editorial, journalistic frame is also the approach of Porter. She says, "I just keep thinking, isn't there some kind of anti-trust rule that's being broken here? It used to be that you could drive in a car somewhere and flip the stations and you could either get ABC news, CBS news or NBC news on the hour. And now it's sort of generic, I'm not sure, news. I don't know who it is anymore. Sometimes they don't even sign off with any kind of tag and you don't know what you are listening to or where it is coming from. It's really strange. I think, to me, deregulation has really caused this huge umbrella factor. You have one company that owns all of the networks and you're getting the same news almost in every market"(Porter, 1999).

Rosse, who was in the network radio news business longer than any of the other interviewees, says consolidation led to a point where distinction between the networks became very unclear. But he has a warning to those who would see concentration of radio network news as something evil. " A lot of people are alarmists about this. I was very alarmed when UPI got out of the viable newsgathering business. You could still (get) UPI (wire service) but it was certainly a shadow of its former self, and I was dreading the time when UPI would fold or become non-competitive with the competition, which is Associated Press, because our system

requires competition. The competition keeps you on your toes, without competition you get lazy, you get indolent, you start making mistakes, you're not giving the customer fair value. But to my surprise, and delight, the Associated Press is the only game in town, pretty much, however, they do have competition in the form of the Reuters News Agency, and there seems to be spirit of recognition on the part of the Associated Press that they better not lay down on the job because they are the only game in town, and if they do start acting that way then the Feds will be breathing down their necks and they're going to have legislation. So I don't think, if you can use that as an analogy, I don't think the broadcast networks are going to reach a point where it's really going to be bad for the consumer. You still have, in radio terms you still have the CBS network which is an amalgam now of NBC, and Mutual, and CBS, and you have ABC. And if you don't like those two, virtually every market, every place in the country has an NPR station, and those guys are going to go on forever doing five minutes of news on the hour, and long form news with Early Edition, and All Things Considered"(Rosse, 1999).

CONCLUSION

There has been a clear shift in government policy toward radio. No longer is the government heavily regulating the industry to ensure that the scarce broadcast spectrum is operated in the public interest. While the public interest idea hasn't changed, the method used to ensure that interest is satisfied has. The marketplace now acts as regulator.

There has long been a debate among journalists about whether the public interest is best served by providing the public with what it wants, or what it needs. When radio networks were at their strongest and when FCC regulations required news, insuring a market for the network's product, networks could supply what the public needed to know with relative economic impunity. Of course, as many will be quick to point out, the idea of what the "public

needed to know" came from the editorial judgment of network journalists and could easily be considered an elitist opinion.

In the past, radio network newscasts were sometimes long enough to accommodate both what people needed and what people wanted. In a perfect world, this might remain the case. But to argue, in the 21st Century, that this is what is needed and that this is sustainable in a free market economy would be to overlook economic reality as well as where commercial radio network news has positioned itself in the information paradigm.

In 1943, when the Supreme Court affirmed the FCC policy of divergent voices on network radio, radio provided the only way to get news with any immediacy. There are now many such outlets including over-the-air television, cable television, satellite television and the Internet, as well as radio network news. Had FCC policy not changed in the 50 years since the "blue" network was ordered to be sold by NBC, there could be no consolidation on the local level or the national level as we now see it. That change opened the marketplace but, instead of setting the trend, it reflected reality. The FCC noted the increasing number of voices from different media when it relaxed ownership rules.

How does the listener use commercial radio network news best? Many complain that it is just a headline service. While there are no longer many long-form documentaries and long newscasts, the bread and butter of network radio news has, since before deregulation, been the five-minute newscast. That newscast always had commercials in it, allowing little time for actual news content. The newscast has become shorter but its headline nature remains essentially unchanged. There may be nostalgia here for something that was never a large part of the business of radio network news.

With so many different forms of media available, a headline service may be all that is needed on commercial radio. The market seems to indicate that the current way radio news is programmed is a means of survival for at least the two players competing in the commercial news network arena. The public interest is being served if there is enough information in a newscast for people to identify what issues they may need to explore in more depth. Where there is a problem is when the headlines of radio news are fluff and don't provide even that basic information.

Citizens do need to be informed in order to function well in a democratic republic such as ours. But there are enough different media providing news and information that the republic is in no danger if radio news continues to decline. People don't necessarily have to get a complete view of the day's news from commercial radio network news.

Commercial network news may be difficult to find on the radio but it is still there. When there is a crisis, radio remains an important place for people to turn for information. Network radio news is not the same as it was in the 1930s and 1940s, but few things have remained unchanged over half-a-century. What network radio has managed to do is survive, despite fierce competition from new media.

The survival of network radio news has taken the form of responding to the market-place by finding a niche, a typical business end-game strategy. While the market orientation may displease journalists, it has allowed at least some of those radio networks to continue their traditional role of informing the public, thereby meeting the goal set by the government of operating in the public interest.

REFERENCES

"An Act to regulate radio communication." In *Public Law No. 264*. 62d Congress, 1912.

"An Act for the regulation of radio communications, and for other purposes.", Public Law No. 632: 69th Congress, 1927.

"Communications Act of 1934." In *An Act to Provide for the regulation of interstate and foreign communication by wire or radio, and for other purposes*, Public Law No. 416: 73d Congress, 1934.

"National Broadcasting Co. v. United States." , 319 U.S. 190, 63 S.Ct. 997, 87 L.Ed. 1944: U.S. Supreme Court, 1943.

Aversa, Jeannine. "FCC head would give broadcasters more leeway to own more stations." *Associated Press*, April 20, 1999.

Bachman, Katy. "Legendary Radio Network Being Eclipsed by Westwood." *MEDIAWEEK*, April 5, 1999, 6.

Bagdikian, Ben H. *The Media Monopoly*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997.

Barnouw, Erik. *A Tower In Babel*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press,, 1966.

Barnouw, Erik. *The Golden Web*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Barnouw, Erik. *The Image Empire*,. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Bartlett, David. "*News in Demand*." *IPI Report*, First Quarter 1998.

Bartlett, David. "Interview with author.", 1999.

Becker, Howard S., and Blanche Geer. "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison." In *Qualitative Methodology: First Hand Involvement with the Social World*, ed. William J. Filstead, 133-142. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970.

Bensman, Dr. Marvin R. *History of Broadcasting, 1920-1960*. University of Memphis, 1999. Accessed October4, 1999. Web Site. Available from http://www.people.memphis.edu/~mbensman/history1.html.

Bittner, John R. *Law and Regulation of Electronic Media*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994.

Blanchard, Margaret A. *History of the Mass Media in the United States*. 1st ed.: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.

Bliss, Edward Jr. *Now the News*. 1st ed.: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Bohannon, Jim. "Interview with author." , 1999.

Bowser, Andrew. "*Radio News: Many sizes fit all*." *Broadcasting and Cable*, August 10 1998.

Brannigan, Gary G. "The Research Interview." In *Effective Interviewing*, ed. Alexander Tolor, 197-205. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1985.

Brodesser, Claude. "Consolidation: When does the dealing end?" *MEDIAWEEK*, Sept. 15, 1997 1997, 24 (2).

Compaine, Benjamin M. *Who Owns the Media?* 1st ed. White Plains, N.Y.: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1979.

Creech, Kenneth C. *Electronic Media Law and Regulation*. 1st ed. Stonehman, MA: Focal Press, 1993.

Curtin, Patricia Ann. "Market-Driven Journalism: A test of two Models and their Implications for Public Relations Information Subsidies and Journalist-Practitioner Relations." Dissertation, The University of Georgia, 1996.

Curtin, Patricia A. "Reevaluating Public Relations Information Subsidies: Market-Driven Journalism and Agenda-Building Theory and Practice." *Journal of Public Relations Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 35.

Demac, Donna A., and Liching Sung. *Questioning the Media*: Sage Publications, 1995.

Demers, David Pearce. *The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction?* 1st ed. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1996.

Drewry, Carole. "The Emergence of Broadcast Advertising: The Trade Press Reacts to the Ethereal Hearth." , 22. unpublished paper, 1995.

Drushel, Bruce E. "*The Telecommunications Act of 1996 and Radio Market Structure*." *The Journal of Media Economics* Vol. 11, no. No. 3 (1998).

FCC. "Notice of proposed rulemaking, multiple ownership of AM, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations." . Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission, 1983.

FCC. "Report and Order, Multiple Ownership of AM, FM and Television Broadcast Stations." , 100 FCC 2d 17. Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission, 1984.

FCC. "Amendment of the Radio-TV Cross-Ownership Rule." . Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission, 1989.

Fisher, Marc. "*Blackout on the Dial*." *American Journalism Review* , no. June (1998).

Fontana, Andrea, and James H. Frey. "Interviewing: the Art of Science." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 361-376. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994.

Freedom Forum. "Media Mergers." *Media Studies Journal* 10, no. 2-3 (1996): 179.

Gaunt, Phillip. *Choosing the News: The Profit Factor in News Selection*: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Ginsburg, Douglas H., Michael H. Botein, and Mark D. Director, eds. *Regulation of the Electronic Mass Media*, American Casebook Series. St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1991.

Gitlin, Todd. "Not So Fast." *Media Studies Journal* Vol. 10, no. No. 2-3 (1996): p 1-6.

Goodman, Mark. "The Radio Act of 1927 as a Product of Progressivism." *Media History Monographs* Vol. 2, no. No. 2 (1999): 10.

Gordon, George N., and Irving A. Falk. *On-the-Spot Reporting: Radio Records History*. 1 ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967.

Grossman, Lawrence K. "*The Death of Radio Reporting: Will TV be Next?*" *Columbia Journalism Review*, September/October 1998.

Halper, Donna. *Donna Halper's Radio History Page*. The Original Old Time Radio WWW Pages, 1999. Accessed October 10, 1999. Web Page. Available from http://www.old-time.com/halper00.html.

Hohl, Tim. "The Emerging Market for Radio News." *RTNDA Communicator*, February 1997.

Jackaway, Gwenyth. "America's press-radio war of the 1930s: a case study in battles between old and new media." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol. 14, no. No. 3 (1994): P.299(16).

Jennings, Peter, and Todd Brewster. *The Century*. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 1998.

Jones, Sue. "The Analysis of Depth Interviews." In *Applied Qualitative Research*, ed. Robert Walker, 56-70. Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing Co., 1985.

Kotler, Philip. "Designing Marketing Strategies." In *Marketing Management*, 756. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1991a.

Kotler, Philip. *Marketing Management*. 1st ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1991b.

Krasnow, Erwin G., and Jack N. Goodman. "The "public interest" standard: the search for the Holy Grail." *Federal Communications Law Journal* 50, no. 3 (1998): 605-636.

Krasnow, Erwin G., Lawrence D. Longely, and Herbert A. Terry. *The Politics of Broadcast Regulation*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Landry, Robert J. *This Fascinating Radio Business*. 1st ed. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946.

Logan, Charles W Jr. "Getting beyond scarcity: a new paradigm for assessing the constitutionality of broadcast regulation." *California Law Review* 85, no. 6 (1997): 1687-1747.

Lowe, Rachael Myers. "Interview with author." , 1999.

Maney, Kevin. *Megamedia Shakeout*. 1st ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995.

Mazzocco, Dennis W. *Networks of Power: Corporate TV's Threat to Democracy*. 1st ed. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994.

McCracken, Grant. *The Long Interview*. Vol. Vol. 13. 1 ed. Qualitative Research Methods. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1988.

Mchale, Tim. "Radio's Fast Trolley to Pottersville." *Brandweek*, June 22 1998.

McKinley, Michael. "Interview with author.", 1999.

McMahon, Morgan E. *Vintage Radio 1887-1929*. 1st ed. North Highlands, CA: Vintage Radio, 1981.

McManus, John H. *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* 1st ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1994.

Miller, Jody, and Barry Glassner. "That 'Inside' and the 'Outside': Finding Realities in Interviews " In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, ed. David Silverman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997.

Miller, Neville. *Let's Keep Radio Free*. 1st ed. Washington, DC: The National Association of Broadcasters, 1942.

Mishkind, Barry. *Broadcast Archive*. Barry Mishkind, 1999. Accessed October 6, 1999. Web Site Available from http://www.oldradio.com/archives/prog/nbc.htm.

Morton-Williams, Jean. "Making Qualitative Research Work: Aspects of Administration." In *Applied Qualitative Research*, ed. Robert Walker: Gower Publishing Company, 1985.

NAB. *Home Page*. National Association of Broadcasters, 1998. Accessed Nov. 20,1998 1998. Web site. Available from www.nab.org.

Neuman, W. Russell. *The Future of the Mass Audience*. 1 ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Overbeck, Wayne. *Major Principles of Media Law*. 10th ed. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.

Parker, Elliot. "Radio News and Deregulation: What's happened to the 'public interest'?" A paper delivered at the AEJMC Conference, 1996.

Pattiz, Norm. "Interview with author." , 1999.

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

Petrozzello, Donna. "Radio Mergers Total $13.4 billion." *Broadcasting and Cable*, April 14, 1997 1997a, 1.

Petrozzello, Donna. "Retailers think young with radio." *Broadcasting & Cable*, Feb. 10 1997b, p.42.

Porter, Barbara. "Interview with author." , 1999.

Porter, Michael E., ed. *Michael E. Porter on Competition and Strategy*. Edited by Michael E. Porter. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1991.

Prato, Lou. "*Still Tuning in to Radio News*." *American Journalism Review*, Sept. 1996.

Rattner, Steven. "A Golden Age of Competition." *Media Studies Journal* Vol. 10, no. No. 2-3 (1996): 7-13.

Robinson, Glen O. "The Law and Economics of Property Rights to Radio Spectrum." *The Journal of Law & Economics* 41 J. Law & Econ. 609 (1998).

Rosse, Dick. "How Sweet It Was." *Broadcasting & Cable*, April 18, 1999 1999a, 74-76.

Rosse, Dick. "Interview with author.", 1999b.

Shane, Ed. "*The State of the Industry: Radio's Shifting Paradigm*." *Journal of Radio Studies* Vol. 5, no. No.2 (1998).

Shaver, Dan. "Broadcast Radio Deregulation and Concentration: A threat to the Quality of Public Discourse?", 54. Unpublished Paper, 1999.

Shaver, Mary Alice. "Application of Pricing Theory in Studies of Pricing Behavior and Rate Strategy in the Newspaper Industry." *The Journal of Media Economics* 8, no. 2 (1995): 10.

Shaw, Donald L. "The Rise and Fall of American Mass Media: Roles of Technology and Leadership." A paper delivered at the Roy W. Howard Public Lecture in Journalism and Mass Communication Research, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, April 4, 1991.

Shelanski, Howard A., and Peter W. Huber. "The Law and Economics of Property Rights to Radio Spectrum." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 41 J. Law & Econ. 581 (1998).

Staff. "The First 60 Years of NBC." *Broadcasting*, June 9, 1986, p.49(8).

Steinbock, Dan. *Triumph and Erosion in the American Media and Entertainment Industries*. 1st ed. Wesport, CT: Quorum Books, 1995.

Stempel, Guido H. III, and Thomas Hargrove. "Mass Media Audiences in a Changing Media Environment." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol. 73, no. No. 3 (1996): 549-558.

Sterling, Christopher H. "Radio Networks." In *History of the Mass Media in the United States*, ed. Margaret A. Blanchard: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.

Sterling, Christopher H., and John M. Kittross. *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*. 1st ed. Belmont., California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1978.

Stone, Vernon. *News Operations at U.S. Radio Stations*. University of Missouri School of Journalism, 1998. Accessed Nov. 14 1998. Web site. Available from www.missouri.edu/~jourvs/graops.html.

Taylor, Chuck. "Westwood Picks up CBS radio division." *Billboard*, April 12, 1997, p.72 (1).

Taylor, Chuck. " A Day of Huge Deals Marks New Radio Era." *Billboard*, Sept. 12 1998a.

Taylor, Chuck. "Merger Frenzy Continues Unabated." *Billboard*, December 26, 1998 1998b.

Tessler, Bart. "Interview with author." , 1999.

Tunstall, Jeremy. *Communications Deregulation: The Unleashing of America's Communications Industry*. 1st ed. New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986.

Underwood, Doug. *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom*. 1st ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Walker, Robert. *Applied Qualitative Research*. Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing Co., 1985.

Wallis, Roger, and Stanley Baran. *The Known World of Broadcast News*: Routledge, 1990.

Weiner, Neil. *Early Internet Business--Stories from Early Radio*. Background Briefing, 1996. Accessed October 2, 1999. Web Site.

West, Robert. *The Rape of Radio*. 1 ed. New York: Rodin Publishing Company, 1941.

White, Thomas H. *Early U.S. Radio History*. 1999. Accessed October 3, 1999 1999. Web Site. Available from http://www.ipass.net/~whitetho/.

Woodward, William Walter. "Deregulation and the Decline of Radio News." Masters Thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 1991.